

Sight and Sound



The Bond look:
'Dr. No' to 'Goldeneye'
'L'avventura' returns:
Antonioni's style
Gothic dreams:
Clive Barker's films
William Friedkin:
From 'The French
Connection' to 'Jade'
Ronan Bennett's diary:
After Arthur Penn



Obsession

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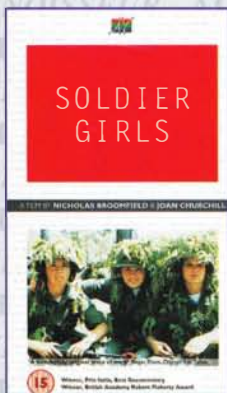


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Nicholas Broomfield & Joan Churchill

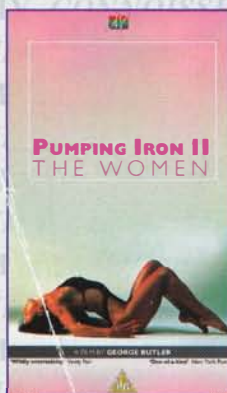


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Fort Gordon, Georgia – a troop of new recruits are put through their paces chanting 'Pillage! Plunder! Burn! Rape!' In any other US army documentary this image wouldn't raise an eyebrow – the surprise here is that the recruits are women. Disturbing, amusing and delightful.

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George Butler



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Following on from the Schwarzenegger original, this looks at what was a new and developing sport – women's bodybuilding. The unintentionally comic interlude provided by the judges disagreeing over what constitutes femininity is the epitome of attitudes which still linger.

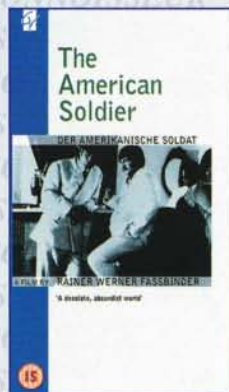


RASHOMON

Akira Kurosawa

A tale of ambush, rape and murder as retold by the four participants with differing versions. Is any of them telling the truth? The film alerted the west to the riches of Japanese cinema, and was one of many Kurosawa films to be remade in Hollywood – this as *The Outrage* starring Paul Newman.

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The sequel to the hugely successful *Yojimbo* again casts Toshiro Mifune as 'The Man with No Name' in this exciting and funny Samurai caper. The final fight scene is so swift and violent it prompted Alexander Walker's warning 'Don't sit too near the screen'.

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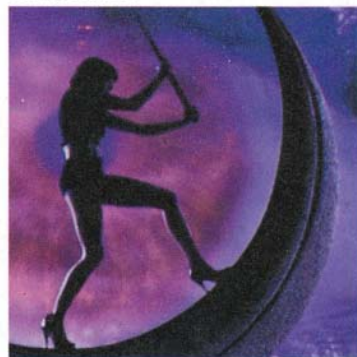
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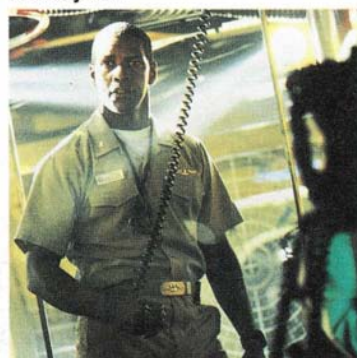
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'Goldeneye': 10



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More than 'The Woodlanders'

Contributors to this issue

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Pat Kirkham is Professor of design history, De Monfort University, and author of numerous books on design.
Geoffrey Nowell-Smith is the editor of the forthcoming *Oxford History of World Cinema*.

Not for nothing does the poster for the recent movie *French Kiss* bear an advert for the Paris travel service, as its "official tourist sponsor". Movies have become an important element in the marketing of cities and landscapes to tourists. When the British Film Commission was set up by the Department of National Heritage in 1991 to ease film-makers' access to British locations, it was not purely for the film-makers' benefit. It was as much because a successful movie can enhance the tourist appeal of its locations – not to mention the work and money that location shoots bring in their train.

With London, British film-makers have long argued that the sheer difficulty and expense of moving around, and getting permissions and police help to close off roads and the like, militate against film companies shooting there. They look with envy at New York, where there are special police whose only job is to mind location shoots. Happily, the recent announcement that the London Film Commission Initiative has achieved 70 per cent of its funding target (helped by a £100,000 grant from the DNH) means that film-makers can expect something more like a New York service in London from 1996 onwards.

For the tourist trade, selling a large conurbation like London, with its immense architectural variety, is a matter of stressing the diversity of its attractions. London is constantly used by television companies for such dramas as *London's Burning* and *The Bill* (they have standing arrangements for location shoots) but it is feature films that are likely to bring in the tourists; now the city can expect to become the backdrop for a greater number and variety of movies as well. This is good news for the capital, but what about the rest of Britain?

At the moment other cities, such as Liverpool, have independent film offices of their own, with brochures emphasising the variety of uses to which the city can be put. However, their main

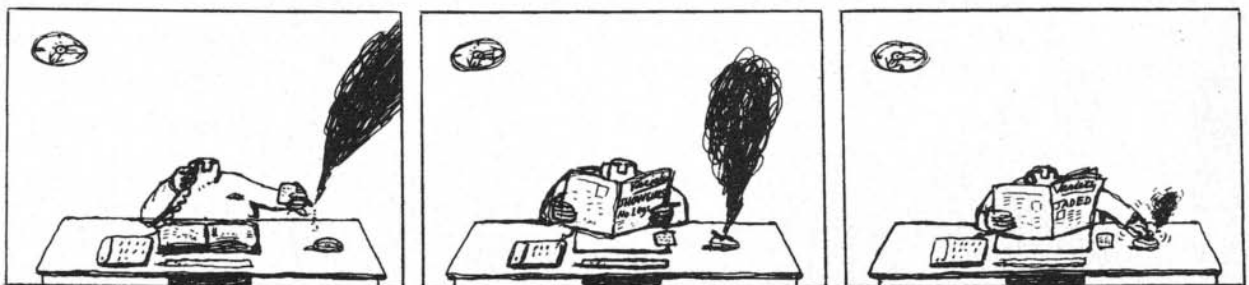
selling point is that filming there will be cheaper and more convenient than filming in London. The advent of the London Commission may mean that this cost advantage will disappear, and that the 80 per cent London-based British film industry will make even more films in its own backyard, putting pressure on the regions to become even more accommodating than they already are.

The BFC is seeking to offset this pressure by setting up regional commissions in the South of England, the South-West of England, South-West Scotland and East Anglia. If these are successful, ease of access will no longer be an issue, and local authorities and tourist agencies will be as enthusiastic as the film companies – providing, that is, the movies themselves are seen to bring an element of movie magic with them. But will they?

From bucolic Peak District Derbyshire in *Pride and Prejudice* to *Cracker's* grim North-West, the landscape of Britain's regions is already widely exploited in television drama. No doubt the Peak District tourist people are as delighted by Austenisation as a South West England Film Commission will be if the two Thomas Hardy adaptations currently in production (*Jude* and *The Woodlanders*) lead to more. But do West Country people want to feel like they live in a permanent Thomas Hardy film set? And how will the North-Western city councils feel if the success of *Cracker* means that their cities are only ever seen as a backdrop for street crime? Cities and landscapes can as easily become typecast along dystopian as heritage industry lines. If the regional film commissions are to have one priority, it ought not to be more movies at any cost. Instead the BFC should be given a specific brief to ensure that our cities and landscapes are used in as many different kinds of films as possible. Only then will the convergence of interests between the tourist industry and the film industry make sense.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry, you remember that Joe Eszterhas movie idea I paid big bucks for? The one he wrote on the back of my wife's grocery list – the only scrap of paper I had on me at the time? Well I've decided that rather than make the film, maybe you should just go out and buy the groceries.'

The business

● Geppetto was right: that little wooden boy has turned out to be nothing but trouble. It'll be interesting to see, though, whether the nose-getting-longer test works in the Los Angeles Superior Court when Francis Ford Coppola's case against Warner Bros is heard.

Coppola and longtime associate Fred Fuchs are suing the studio on the grounds that it prevented his company, American Zoetrope, from making a live-action version of Carlo Collodi's classic children's story *Pinocchio*.

The whole affair apparently dates back nearly a decade to when Coppola pulled off another of his characteristically fated coups, namely spotting a trend years before everyone else but somehow not quite launching it. The trend in question – making movies based on successful animated films but using live actors – is just about to peak, nearly eight years later. *The Flintstones* and *Casper* are already certified hits, and live-actor versions of *Snow White* and *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* are currently in production.

It was in 1988, claims Coppola's suit, that the director first had the idea of doing *Pinocchio* with actors. But it was not until 1991 that he approached Warner Bros. In March of that year, he had a meeting about directing the film for them. In the summer, however, Warners came back to him with the news that they were going to make their own version of the story (which is in the public domain): would American Zoetrope be interested in providing development services on the story? This was agreed in principle but, as with 90 per cent of such plans, nothing else happened.

Then, last year, Coppola came back to the *Pinocchio* idea and began developing what he and Fuchs say was a totally different film: a musical, based on the Collodi book. An agreement was reached with Columbia Pictures to produce, studio space was booked at Pinewood and, last September, a production office was opened up there as Coppola began pre-production on the film.

When Warners got wind of this, they issued an injunction to prevent the Columbia/Coppola/Collodi film from being made, stating that Coppola had a prior agreement to make the film with them (even if they had no intention of proceeding with the agreement). After extensive consultation, Coppola came to the conclusion that he simply did not have the resources to take on Warner Bros (or that's what he said at the time) and the film was cancelled. So was the studio booking at Pinewood, which involved a large, non-refundable deposit.

The timing of Coppola's suit is a little curious. It was filed with the

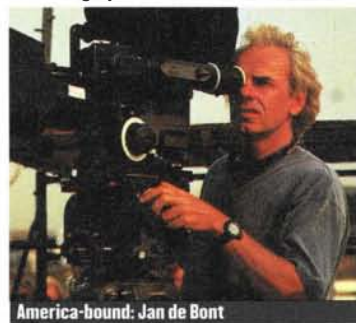
Los Angeles Superior Court on 13 September this year, some ten months after the *Pinocchio* film was cancelled, and less than a week before the start of principal photography on *Jack* (S&S, October), Coppola's first film as director since *Bram Stoker's Dracula* in 1992.

Meanwhile, production is now complete on a totally different version of the story, shot this summer in the Czech Republic. Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*, directed by one-time British music-video whizz kid Steve Barron (whose other films as director include *Electric Dreams* and the first *Turtles* movie, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*), stars Martin Landau as Geppetto and Jonathan Taylor Thomas – who will be seen in the US this Christmas in the title role of Disney's Christmas release, *Tom Sawyer* – as Pinocchio.

The producer is Raju Patel, who cashed in on the cartoons-into-actors trend last year when, against all the odds, he had a hit with the excellent live-action version of *The Jungle Book* (Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*), starring Jason Scott Lee.

Even the most casual observer of Dutch cinema will have noticed a trend for its film people to go to Hollywood and make hugely successful movies of the sort that could never have been made in Holland, if only because there isn't enough space for all the car chases.

Take Rutger Hauer, Paul Verhoeven (although all the signs are that his latest film, the sleaze epic 'Showgirls', is going to be a flop in the US) and more recently cinematographer Jan de Bont, who shot such



America-bound: Jan de Bont

films as *'Die Hard'*, *'The Hunt for Red October'* and *'Basic Instinct'* before hitting the bullseye with his directorial debut, *'Speed'*.

De Bont, who has just completed a bruising stint on the movie version of the Michael Crichton story 'Twister', recently returned to Europe to tell us yokels how it is done, hosting a workshop organised by, of all things, the European Film Academy. Entitled 'Time for Action', it was held at Studio Babelsberg outside Berlin in mid-November and was designed to give European film-makers hints on how to put together a tightly-paced action scene (of which 'Speed' is undeniably full).

It was scarcely an open session, however. Participants in the workshop had to have completed and released at least one feature film. And the course fee was 1000 DM (around £435).

● Liv Ullmann's screen version of

Pinocchio: the wooden boy comes to life

Kristin Lavransdatter, whose clumsy progress to the screen has already been featured in this column (S&S, March 1995), has now been completed and shown to the world – or at any rate Norway, where it was rapturously received at this summer's national showcase, the Haugesund Film Festival.

But the film's problems do not look like stopping there. Those who saw the three-hour *Kristin Lavransdatter* at the Montreal Film Festival were apparently unanimous that it could – indeed should – lose 30 minutes from its running time. Tele-München, the film's German co-producer, which put up 40 per cent of the \$7 million budget, and Cine-International, the Munich-based sales agency handling the film, agreed.

Not so Ullmann, who responded to the suggestion in much the same huffy way she answered those who asked about budget over-runs. "Let them edit away," she reportedly told the Norwegian press after the Montreal screening, "but they will have to edit my name off the credits as well."

Ms Ullmann is obviously a formidable lady. But then so, too, is Lilli Tye-Holm, who runs Cine-International. It should be an interesting tussle – possibly more interesting than the film.

To date, the only foreign sale to have been concluded is to South Korea.

Once again, changes in the French film-support system look like presaging the way the rest of Europe will be going.

It may have percolated through to the consciousness of even those readers not resident in the South Pacific that France recently underwent a change of government and related priorities. Now the cinema is catching up.

Under Mitterrand, the Conseil National de la Cinématographie – the all-powerful audiovisual industry agency – was headed by Dominique Wallon, an energetic organiser who was a personal friend of the former President. This was a state of affairs which could scarcely have been allowed to continue, and

Wallon left the CNC

shortly after this spring's election.

It took Chirac until 27 September to come up with a replacement, but his choice is a pretty clear pointer to upcoming French cultural policy. The new CNC boss, 49-year-old Marc Tessier, is a former civil servant who has risen inexorably through the private media sector in France. He ran the massive ad agency Havas until 1987 and was in at the start of Canal +, only leaving the hugely successful pay channel in May, following a boardroom tussle which (for once) he lost.

His remit at the CNC is the usual vague piece of policy-ese: "to make the adjustments necessitated by recent technological developments and the increasingly international – and above all European – perspective and to preserve a strong cinematic and audiovisual industry in France."

But there can be few who doubt that Tessier's appointment, following on recent criticisms of the operations of the CNC and its various film subsidy programmes, will not result in a policy more inclined towards establishing solid industrial foundations than taking cultural risks. In France – as elsewhere in Europe – government money will, it seems, only be used to fine-tune the market, not provide an alternative to it.

● Some may be tempted to read the following piece of news in much the same way: *Trois vies et une seule mort*, the latest film from the Chilean émigré director (and general iconoclast) Raul Ruiz will star Marcello Mastroianni.

Produced by Paulo Branco for La Sept Cinéma, European cultural channel Arte and Canal +, the film – with a presumably intentional echo in its title of the Hugh Grant comedy which was a massive hit in France last year – is about three parallel lives, with Mastroianni playing a beggar who is actually a millionaire.

Production is due to start this side of Christmas, with Almodóvar regulars Victoria Abril and Marissa Paredes, French actor Melvil Poupaud and Mastroianni's daughter, Chiara, also in the cast.

Futureproof

Film books are a curious thing. Buy a copy of Leonard Maltin's *Movie & Video Guide* and it's instantly obsolete. Does it have movies that are going to be released tomorrow in it? Certainly not. Aside from the obvious time-travel problems involved in producing a book like that, how would Maltin's publishers ever sell you next year's edition if your current one contained every movie ever made and every movie that is going to be made. The solution to the problem is, naturally, a computer.

Not content with owning and controlling Microsoft's software empire, Bill Gates has inevitably moved toward the film world and could monopolise the film guide industry of the future. Ever since multimedia, the buzz word of the 90s, became technologically possible, Microsoft has been developing products for the home. One of which was *Cinemania*, a computerised database comprised of entries on 20,000 movies which can be accessed via a CD ROM drive. Cinéphiles smiled wryly on this original product when it was first released two or three years ago: though cute, with its tiny video clips and short sound-bites, containing thousands of stills from films and of stars and directors, in terms of written entries it remained

far from comprehensive. It was just a toy, too flashy to have any serious impact, and in the end just not as good as the real thing – a book. Gates was quick to pick up on these weaknesses and slowly Microsoft has been taking out the competition by simply buying them up. *Cinemania '96* now contains the entire contents of Leonard Maltin's *Movie & TV Guide*, Pauline Kael's *5001 Nights At the Movies*, Roger Ebert's *Video Companion*, Cinebook's *Motion Picture Guide*, Baseline's *Encyclopedia of Film*, James Monaco's *Film Glossary* and Ephraim Katz's *The Film Encyclopedia*. And moves are afoot to acquire British and European guides.

Now with the release of *Cinemania '96*, Microsoft's ace card has been played. Unlike *Cinemania*'s hard copy counterparts, this new breed of 'virtual guide' can be updated constantly via a connection to the Internet. The new details can be stored on your computer and seamlessly integrated into *Cinemania '96*. It's futureproof.

This all sounds good for the consumer, especially when you consider that with the advent of higher capacity discs, future incarnations of *Cinemania* won't merely contain tiny two-inch square snippets of video from a handful of



classics but longer clips, from many more movies, filling the screen with images and the speakers with Dolby stereo surround sound. Unfortunately, the competition is extremely weak. The few other computer guides on the market draw their information from very poor sources and employ unquantified and therefore probably unqualified reviewers. The details contained are often either sketchy or wildly inaccurate. That other hyped buzzword entity, the Internet, now offers *cinéastes* The International Movie Database in Cardiff. Truth be known, it also suffers from the same inaccuracy and similarly offers poor quality reviews by unqualified critics. As Microsoft are the biggest software company in the world, competition in terms of price is almost impossible. Microsoft simply undercut the

enemy by a massive margin and the battle is lost.

As we move to a new century, heady with the technological promise of a brighter future, are we unwittingly becoming pawns in a consumer world ruled by such media and multimedia barons as Rupert Murdoch, Bill Gates and Robert Maxwell (had this last survived his assassination rumoured to have been carried out by an élite group of time-travelling cyberhitmen from the year 2097 on the payroll of Murdoch Industries)? Is it only a matter of time before Bill Gates announces the new Microsoft Film Studios, where movies are interactive, all form and no content? The one irony in all this is that the struggle for enhanced technology is going to empower the consumer. Domestic video equipment will soon, if not now, enable independent film-makers to make feature films with their digital camcorder and edit them on the computer suite in their children's games room. The conglomerates can only maintain control over the technology by relegating power to the user: the tighter their grip, the more will be squeezed out between the fingers for us. It's not the future that tells us that, it's history.

Chris Jones

Readers who – like Mr Busy – regret the passing of Argentinian director Maria Luisa Bemberg in May will be pleased to know that the script she was working on at the time of her death is going to be made into a film after all.

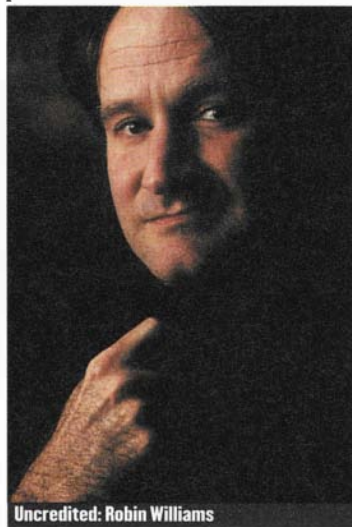
Bemberg, director of such unique films as *'Yo, la peor de todas'* ('I the Worst of All') and *'De eso no se habla'* ('I Don't Want to Talk About It'), apparently completed the screenplay for *'Un extraño verano'* ('A Strange Summer') just two days before she died. She also left very clear instructions as to who was to make the film: Alejandro Maci (who worked with her on the screenplay, an adaptation of Silvina Ocampo's story, *'El impostor'*) will direct, while regular Bemberg collaborators Oscar Kramer and Felix Monti will respectively produce and be director of photography.

● Robin Williams' fondness for showing up uncredited in films which the actor wants to make (but his agent doesn't) manifested itself in an especially high-profile way recently when he played a major supporting role in Christopher Hampton's Conrad adaptation, *The Secret Agent*.

The film, shot on locations around London and at Ealing Studios in June and July, is Hampton's second as

director. And, like *Carrington*, which was originally going to be directed by Mike Newell, Hampton took on the task after someone else – in this case Bob Hoskins, who still co-produces and stars in *The Secret Agent* – dropped out.

Adapted from the Conrad novel which was (rather freely) reworked by Hitchcock into *Sabotage*, *The Secret Agent* tells the story of Adolf Verloc, an agent provocateur who is coerced into an act



Uncredited: Robin Williams

of terrorism which doesn't directly kill him but eventually destroys his life. Williams plays the mad explosives expert (known as the Professor) who prepares the bomb for Verloc (Hoskins).

Credited in the film's advance announcements under his habitual pseudonym of 'George Spelvin', Williams is apparently instantly recognisable in the film (which also stars Patricia Arquette, Gérard Depardieu and Eddie Izzard).

So much for my enthusiasm about the return of the American musical (S&S, October). Michael Ritchie's film of 'The Fantasticks', starring Joel Grey, heavily trailered through the summer in US theatres and originally due to be released at Thanksgiving, has now disappeared completely from North American release schedules.

The show premiered off-Broadway in May 1960 and is still (yes, that's right, still) running in the same venue (the Sullivan Street Theatre), 35 years later. It is the American theatre's equivalent of 'The Mousetrap', especially popular with college theatre arts departments, community playhouses and dinner theatres, with almost 20,000 productions having taken place since 1960. The term 'warhorse' would not be inappropriate.

No rumours have reached Mr Busy as to why 'The Fantasticks' (best-known song: 'Try to Remember') has been forgotten. But there is presumably something ominous in the fact that almost all reports on the production (including my own) have contained a paragraph or so speculating on the odds against anyone making a full-scale Hollywood musical in 1995.

Looks like the odds won.

● Isn't freedom a wonderful thing? Russian television recently hired that leading dissident from the Soviet era, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, to present a 15-minute, Monday-night show in which he could say anything he liked. Solzhenitsyn did, focusing his never-very-subtle critical scorn on the post-Soviet state of the nation and the people who (for want of a better word) run the new Russia.

The experiment didn't last long. At the end of September, Solzhenitsyn returned home to find a brief message on his answering machine saying the show had been cancelled.

This, of course, could never have happened under the Soviet system, because (a) Solzhenitsyn would not have had an answering machine and (b), if he had, it would not have worked.



● Kathryn Bigelow shoots in light. Cinema's outlaw, she disrupts assumptions about where a film can go, taking genres and ripping them apart to see what they might be made of, always finding the dark stuff inside. Her debut, *The Loveless*, was a studied homage to the 50s biker movie (though in its fascistic fascination with the gleam of chrome and the contours of the leather more specifically Kenneth Anger than *The Wild One*). In *Near Dark*, she took on the Western, infecting it with a vampire-movie strain to produce a terrifying new mythology: an uncanny family of the shabby Undead roam America's heartlands, feeding on rednecks found in roadhouses and finally combusting, quick as old film stock in the light. Next she skewered assumptions about both genre and gender in *Blue Steel*, a melancholy policier set in a nightmare Manhattan city-scape, predating *The Silence of the Lambs* in its scrutiny of a woman's place in the genre. Jamie Lee Curtis played rookie cop Megan, who finds that she is the one being 'patrolled' when she becomes the fetishised object of a psychotic Wall Street trader's desire. And in *Point Break*, a kind of 'Only Angels Have Surfboards', the male body is thrust to its limits as Bigelow pushed her cinematic style to its own dizzyingly kinetic limits – in a spume-action movie that knowingly states, "There is too much testosterone around here." Keanu Reeves gives a credible performance as the youngblood FBI man on the trail of Patrick Swayze's band of beach-bum bankrobbers; he becomes increasingly fascinated by them as they roam the shores and streets, dressed (and latex-masked) as former US Presidents. All these films fray the edges of genre, boasting protagonists who straddle the line between law and disorder. And Bigelow too furtively roams the spectrum, hard to pin down as she plans her raids on movie lore. Hollywood's uncanny daughter, she gets up to all sorts of tricks, her work revealing her art-school background in truly arresting images – the Smith & Wesson in *Blue Steel* that her camera turns into an intricate metallic sculpture – and in her choosing to unstash (rather than render seamless) cinema's narratives. Which makes her a disquieting presence, unsurprisingly difficult to accommodate.

This rustler's restless desire to confront and challenge the power of the medium is nowhere more evident than in *Strange Days*, Bigelow's most provoca- ►

Alter egos: Angela Bassett as Mace, top left; Ralph Fiennes as Lenny, left; Juliette Lewis as Faith, right



Mixing 'Peeping Tom' with techno-noir, 'Strange Days' is the most provocative of Kathryn Bigelow's genre-bending movies to date. By Lizzie Francke



◀ tive work to date, from a script by James Cameron and (former *Time* film critic and Scoresese-collaborator) Jay Cocks. It's a draining, dazzling vision of a not-too-distant future in which urban America is ready to ignite, a cyber-*Peeping-Tom-cum-Vertigo* which puts a further spin on the history of film's own interrogation of voyeuristic desires. Its strange beauty is in the staring, scared eye of the beholder on which the camera lingers in the opening credits: right from the jolting fast-forward false start, it invites a self-reflexive reading of all that unreels before the audience, as we fall, fatally, for what we see, only to be hauled up short, to begin all over again. As with the opening gambit in *Blue Steel*, in which Curtis' Megan is shown going through with an arrest that turns out to be a dummy run, Bigelow demands that we be on our guard concerning what we are about to experience. We should also be on guard about the shape of things to come. A techno-noir thriller in which lowlife hero Lenny Nero's obsession for a girl who might once have loved him draws him deeper and deeper into darkness, *Strange Days* is a dystopian-nightmare movie set on New Year's Eve 1999, in a decaying, riot-police-patrolled Los Angeles, city of tarnished angels, where teenage girls mug Santa Claus and one can only drive in a bulletproof car. The images the film draws on are only too familiar: including members of the LAPD pulverising Rodney King and the inferno their acquittal sparked. It is a collage of genres, as *verité* jostles with romance and detective plot, and with other directors' plots and styles, from Anger through Hitchcock to Walter Hill; it demonstrates film's different possibilities, whether death-wish fulfilment or something more restorative. For amidst a ragged chaos in which the story itself seems to break up and split off into a multitude of endings, *Strange Days* is ultimately able to offer a utopian dream resolution in a final clinch scene, as the black and white protagonists are united amidst a spectacular hail of technicoloured light (this in a race-cleft Hollywood that still seems to have a problem with the miscegenation romance). Indeed, like cinema itself, *Strange Days* can be viewed in the positive and the negative, as it picks its way through a maze of first-world millennial fears. As such it is both a Cassandra-like storm-warning about distressed political-economic reality, and a disquieting examination of the medium used to portray it.

A range of points-of-view is scanned, the first being that of Nero's down-at-designer-heel ex-cop currently sloping around the city hustling up an illicit trade in the latest technological booty: SQUID, an apparatus that can record audio-visual sensations "straight from the cortex", allowing experiences to be mainlined from one brain to another, in the form of 30-minute "playback clips" (the Superconducting Quantum Interference Device was purloined from William Gibson's lexicon, but a similar gizmo is used in both Michael Reeves' 1967 *The Sorcerers* and Douglas Trumbull's 1983 *Brainstorm* – though it's here that the idea's potential is explored to the full). Crucially for the film's mythology, SQUID, devised by the Feds for surveillance purposes but now out on the black market, offers opportunities for men and women to get inside one another's skin. Unsurprisingly, though, Lenny's clients all seem to be men; whether the sheepish husband who wants to err without tarnishing his wedding ring, or the wheelchair-bound amputee who wants the sensation of running again. Like so many dealers, Lenny himself seems to be the most hooked on his wares, replaying choice moments from his relationship with his ex-lover Faith (Juliette Lewis, perfectly cast as a flaky wannabe rock singer), losing himself in these memories and unable to see beyond the playback. (Lenny is played by Ralph Fiennes – in whose eyes one can detect a faint hint of coldness left over from *Schindler's List*'s Goeth.)

Porno for wireheads

In this *Vertigo* playback, Lenny is a latterday Scottie who has fallen for the image not the substance of his own sweetly remembered Faith-Madeleine, while Angela Bassett's sinewy, wise, tough-but-tender Mace is a new take on best friend Midge in Hitchcock's film. Bassett played Tina Turner in the recent biopic, *Tina: What's Love Got to Do with It?*; this follow-up role, part Angela Davis, part Cleopatra Jones, continues Bigelow's line of androgynous women with Hawksian heroine-names: *Blue Steel*'s Megan and *Point Break*'s Tyler (Lori Petty, played with far more substance than she gave *Tank Girl*). Compared to Lenny (the "Teflon man who is really a goofball romantic"), Mace is a woman of extraordinary mettle, the steady force who keeps a concerned eye on him and perspective on the disordered world all around. Importantly, she refuses to buy into the playback trip: "I don't

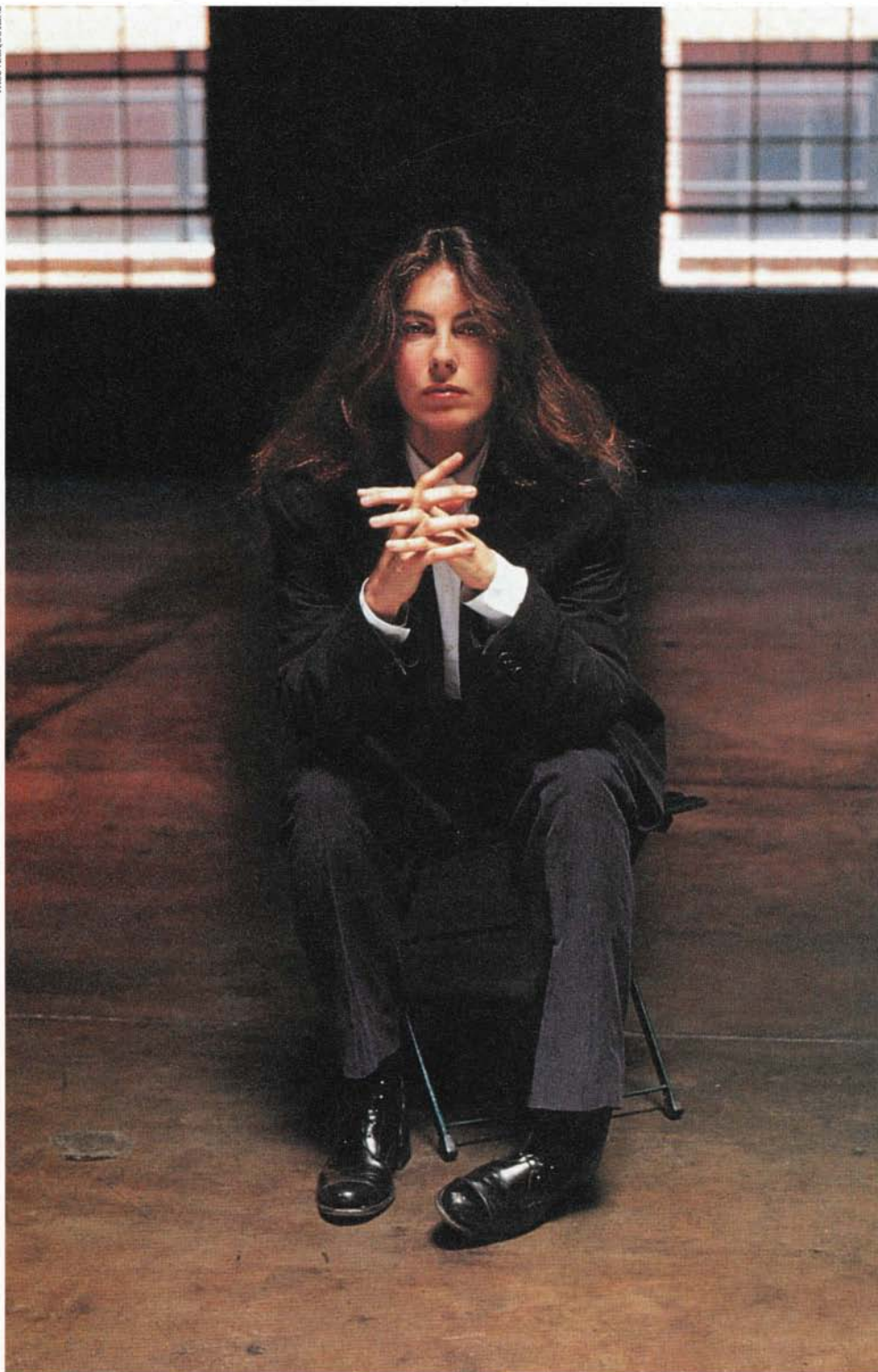
fool with that... it's porno for wireheads." Which becomes particularly evident to Lenny when he finds a lethal 'snuff' clip depicting his and Faith's friend Iris being brutally raped and murdered. Shot in a cold, foetid grey-green – one is reminded of the goggle-wearing Jame Gumb's pallid view as he pursues his victims in *The Silence of the Lambs* – this is a flatly framed, degraded vision of murderous desire, cinema warped down to the lowest denominator. Wiring into this brutal vision, Lenny reels in pain. It is a draining, mournful moment: he and we look into Iris' dead eyes and see reflected not just the girl's hooded executor (who has taken her life as casually as one takes a picture), but the many dead eyes of cinema's victims, from Janet Leigh onwards. By refusing to partake of the playback experience, it is Mace, the woman, who sees more clearly what it is all about, and with whom the moral centre of *Strange Days* can ultimately be found. If Mace is Bigelow's alter ego, so is stolen-dream merchant Lenny, as the director negotiates with both the fascination and repulsion of cinema.

Certainly it touches a nerve; still, it's revealing that critics are already making so much of it being a woman that confronts them with this disturbing vision. Of what has since become the 'controversial' rape scene, for example, *Variety*'s Todd McCarthy wrote: "Ironically for a film directed by a woman, more than a few women will have problems with these scenes" (one might worry about the men or women who don't), and Sheila Whitaker's decision to open the London Film Festival with the movie has prompted further protest. Undoubtedly Bigelow's detractors find this director, who refuses to stay in a safe, recognisable place, most troublesome – so they fetishise her and her interests instead. The statement trotted out about *Strange Days* – "The most violent film ever directed by a woman in Hollywood" – is in truth a cheap, facile line that has hounded Bigelow since *Near Dark*, masking connections she may be making as she interrogates not just the roots of violence – for example in the family, as in *Blue Steel*'s stunning scene in which Megan arrests her father for beating up her mother – but also, crucially, the inherently cinematic attractions of the violent aesthetic.

In fact she's been investigating cinema's visceral power since her first short: in *Set-Up*, two philosophy professors are heard discussing the fight that they and the audience are watching.

Genre-benders: 'Loveless', below; 'Point Break', right; 'Blue Steel', second right; 'Near Dark', far right





Kathryn Bigelow
born San Francisco 1953
 "I felt painting was isolating and a little bit elitist, whereas film has the potential to become an incredible social tool with which you can reach a mass audience. Some painting requires a certain amount of knowledge or education on the part of the viewer to be appreciated. Film is not like that. It 'must' be accessible to work within a cinematic context. Given that, the transition made a lot of sense. Film is

accessible, challenging and very stylistic, very visual. It works as a narrative and I saw it as a kind of modern literature. It's a very complex medium and I love it."

Films as director
Set-up (1978)
 (short: 17 mins)
 "'Set-up' is an analysis of why violence in a cinematic form is so seductive."
The Loveless (1981)
 (co-directed/scripted with Monty Montgomery)
 "'The Loveless' was meant

to be a psychological biker film... analytical and intellectual..."
Near Dark (1987)
 (co-scripted with Eric Red)
 "I think of 'Near Dark' as a 'Vampire Western'. Although I'm interested in genre pictures, I'm not interested in formulaic movies, where there's a tendency to get trapped within the conventions."
Blue Steel (1990)
 (co-scripted with Eric Red)
 "I don't think a work of art is ever finished. It's only abandoned. You always try

to negotiate for more – I'll be negotiating until it's been out in video for ten years."
Point Break (1991)
 "The piece had a format whereby the visuals could be extraordinary and challenging, which is something I always look for."
Strange Days (1995)

Cast
Born in Flames (1983)
 (dir Lizzie Borden)

Looking out: Kathryn Bigelow, above left



An experimental exercise completed while she was at Columbia Film School in the late 70s, where she studied with Peter Wollen (subsequently cited as a major influence), this was the pivot for Bigelow's career, a reflexive blueprint for subsequent films but also a logical progression from her previous artworks. For she trained first as a painter, at the San Francisco Art Institute and the Whitney Museum Independent Study Programme (where her teachers included Susan Sontag and Richard Serra); later she became involved with the Art and Language group, which examined the ideological implications of one's practice. Indeed for her the transition to narrative film-making was itself a politicised act: as she has said, what drew her to cinema was its "potential as a social tool. It can reach such a broad range of people."

Bursting and draining

But this transition into the mainstream – and with it the renegotiation of the contract between film and audience (including critics) – has proved fraught for her, with her movie-mutating designs. As I write, *Strange Days* has floundered at the American box office in its first week, opening wide in 1,691 screens but taking in a weekend gross of only \$3,656,012 (a less than healthy average of \$2,162). In many ways she is still the avant-garde film-maker endeavouring to put high concept gloss on her ideas – the evidence here being the narrative slippages, the trip-up finale, and the image abstractions, where visuals are drained of colour one moment, pumped to bursting point the next. It's telling that her most successful film in the US to date has been the more 'straight' *Point Break*, the film most easily pinned into a genre niche. Experimental artists may raid the popular, but intervention still proves a less successful option.

Bigelow seems destined to wander the margins, never more so than now. She may take some small comfort from the eventual critical turnabout on the similarly vilified *Peeping Tom*, a clear antecedent for *Strange Days*. But her long-nurtured Joan of Arc project, *Company of Angels*, has surely been jeopardised. The story of the daughter of France who ends up betrayed and burnt as a witch, only to be canonised long centuries later, must seem more appropriate than ever. Those who shoot in light know too well the dangers of the flames.

'Strange Days' opens on 12 January

DOTS & SICKLES

Pat Kirkham on Maurice Binder's Bond film titles

● Asked recently about memorable film title sequence designs (S&S June '95), Billy Wilder cited the late Maurice Binder's, for the James Bond series. The hallmark for all the Bond movies, it is one of the best-known titles ever produced. Certainly it's hard today to think of Special Agent 007, novelist Ian Fleming's creation, without seeing him as he first appears on film: through the barrel of a gun, walking and turning to shoot at the camera. Wilder thought the titles superior to the films themselves (Binder was responsible for most of them). In 1970 Wilder commissioned him to design the opening credit sequence for *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*.

Binder was born in New York City in 1925 (only five years after Saul Bass, whose title designs would be an inspiration for him). He had no formal training, in graphic design or in film-making, although as a young boy, encouraged by his mother, he had attended Saturday art classes. His first job was at Macy's, the world's largest department store, where – so the story goes – he rose from teaboy to art director: he designed their catalogues and advertisements, and eventually oversaw all their publicity. After serving in the Middle East during World War Two, he took a job at Universal Studios, with artistic charge of the publicity output; later, at Columbia, he masterminded the advertising and marketing campaigns for *Gilda* (1946, Charles Vidor).

But he rose to fame in the movie world only when he went independent in 1957. Till his death in 1991, he worked on title sequences, the work he is best known for. But he didn't just deal in the beginnings of movies. He also continued to work in advertising and marketing, which he knew well, and to design

posters and press handouts, as well as editing trailers. The 'coming attractions' for the Bond movies he produced right up until the mid-80s, and it seems fitting that the MGM/UA Home Video Special Collector's Edition issues of the Bond series include their original theatrical trailers (with the Bonds, the same trailer went to all countries, only the dubbing being changed). He was a good editor, skilled and concise: the skills gained producing titles helped when making trailers. They complemented each other: he had to know the films intimately to cut the trailers, and this produced good credits.

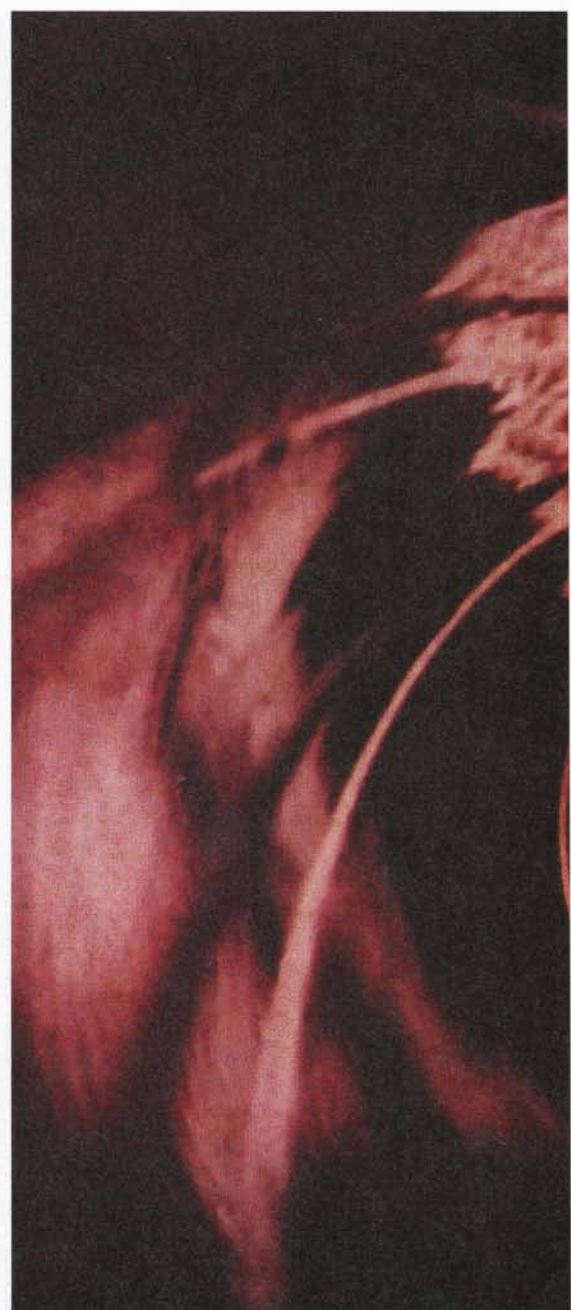
His work was an example of a new approach to title design that had begun in Hollywood but soon spread to Europe. In 1955, *The Man With The Golden Arm* had established Bass as a title-designer of great distinction, and Binder's first titles were executed in the USA only two years later (for *The James Dean Story*). In 1958 came commissions from director Stanley Donen for *Indiscreet* and *Damn Yankees*, and he continued to work with Donen for some years – on *Once More, With Feeling!* (1959), *Surprise Package* (1960), *The Grass Is Greener* (1960), *Charade* (1963), *Arabesque* (1966), *Two For The Road* (1966), *Bedazzled* (1967) and *Staircase* (1969). (*Charade* is considered by many to be his best title.) Joining Bass and Binder in the 60s, in a spate of highly creative opening sequences, were, among others, Pablo Ferro (*The Russians Are Coming*, 1965; *Dr Strangelove*, 1963; *Bullitt*, 1968), Richard Williams (*What's New Pussycat*, 1965; *Casino Royale*, 1967; *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, 1968), Friz Freleng and David DePatie (*The Pink Panther*, 1963) and Robert Brownjohn (*From Russia with Love*, 1963; *Goldfinger*, 1964).

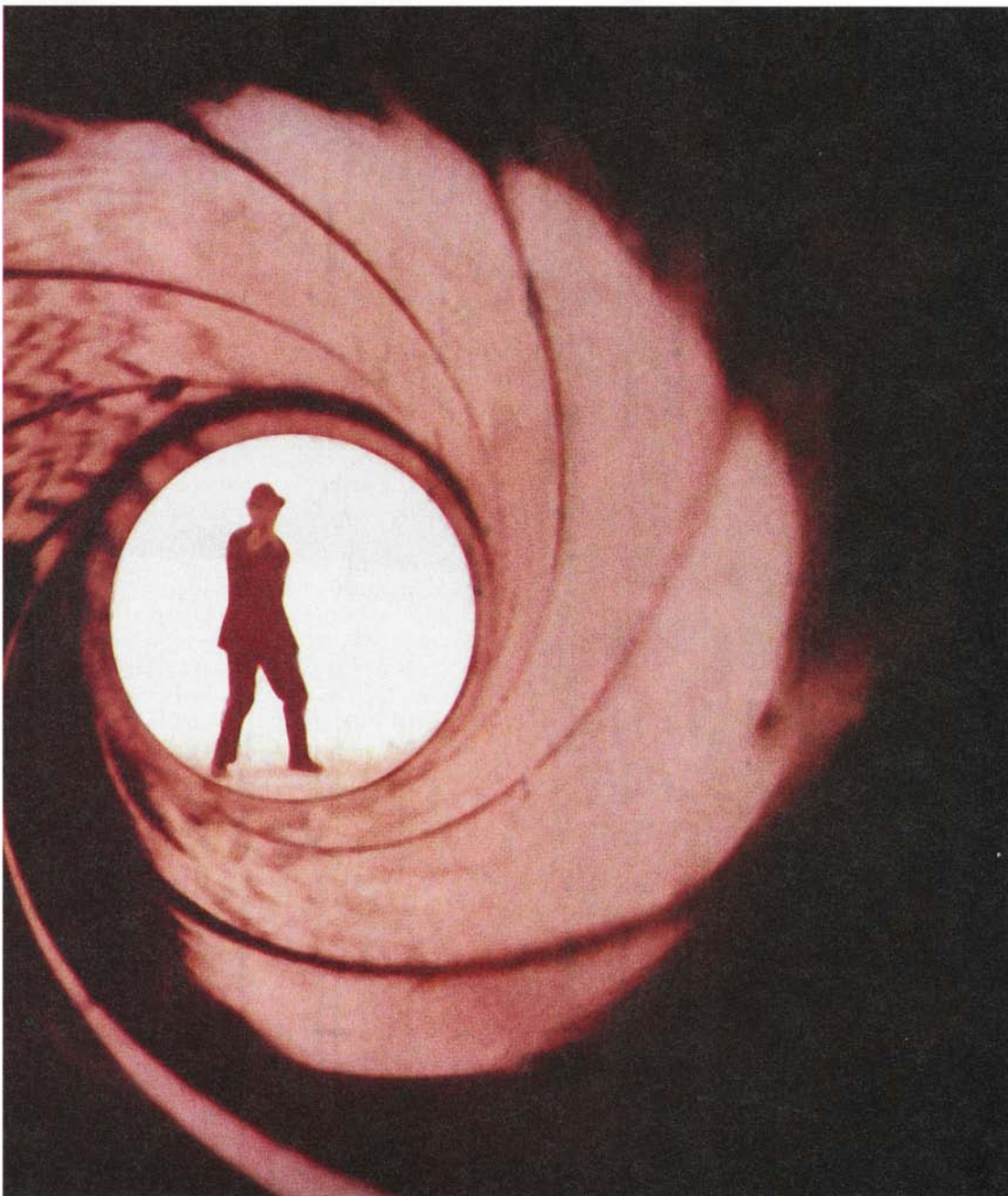
Although the production of much of his work continued to be executed in England, at National Screen Services and later at General Screen Enterprises, Binder (who lived in Paris for a while) produced a large number (some estimate as many as 200) of title sequences in the rest of Europe, most of which remain little known (not just there but also in Britain and the USA).

He was volatile, urbane, "a gentleman scholar with a wonderful sense of the world", as friends said, and, above all, funny; Alyce Faye Eichelberger (now married to John Cleese) describes ►

DR. NO

The very first frame of the 'Dr. No' sequence features the names Albert R. Broccoli and Harry Saltzman, in white on a black background. The '&' sign joining the names is black inside a small white circle. That circle, representing a computer dot, moves across a black screen, and grows bigger. Black and white was then considered a very chic combination, used to striking effect in Op Art, and the circle was also an extremely popular motif in the 60s. Certain art movements fetishised the geometric at this time, and many placed much faith in progress through science and technology. Binder began the design with ideas about computers and electronics, increasingly popular themes for designers as certain visual notions entered the public domain, including atomic research, mathematical formulae, diagrammatic representations of communications theory and molecular structures.





Binder wanted to reveal Bond through the barrel of a gun. He enlarged the white computer dot he had started the sequence with, to transform it into the inner circle of a gun barrel. He found drawing circles tedious, especially in the amount needed for animation. Never one for hand labour for its own sake, or using complex technology when there was a simple workaday solution, he used ordinary coloured gummed labels from a nearby stationery shop. He simply used a still photograph that he greatly admired (by Saunders Studio) of a gun barrel. With the barrel image close to the lens of the camera, the only way he could achieve sufficient depth of field was to use a simple pinhole pierced in a sheet of black card.

The still photograph so obtained was then double-printed with a live-action shot (matted out to leave only the central circle) of Bond firing at the viewer. To those who do not know that it is intended to represent a gun barrel, the image suggests either a human eye or an activated camera shutter, both of which reference the ways of seeing and recording central to Binder's work. The 'eye' recalls the Bass title sequence for 'Vertigo' (1958, Alfred Hitchcock), as does Danny Kleinman's for 'Goldeneye'.

The gun barrel turns back into a computer dot, and a fast-moving, colourful animated-dot spectacular follows. Happenings and mind-blowing light, sound and multi-media shows were spreading from the USA to Europe at this time, and this 'show' suggests Bond's world has other aspects to it than guns: excitement, experimentation and – as the occasional flashing dots and lights warn – dangerous things to come. Welcome to a world of fun, but also of constant, almost frenetic change; of order and of chaos, the dots forming irregular as well as regular patterns.

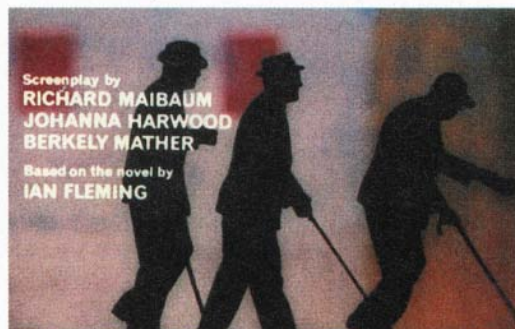
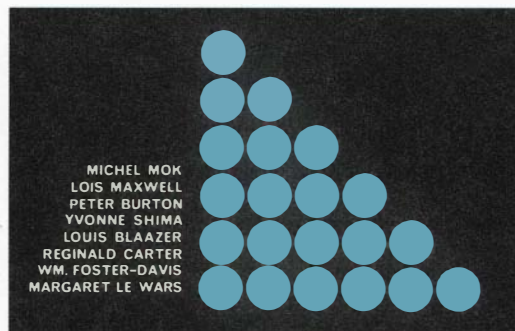
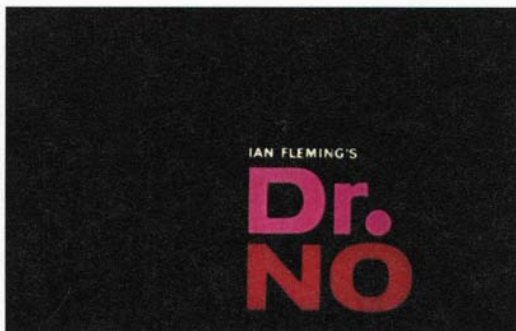
The film's title forms from the dots, with an ingenuity that still delights. The fresh, bright colours used – pink, red, orange, green, blue, lavender – were an important feature of Pop Art and the school of design that sprang from it and reinforced the 'cool' trendy aspects of the

Bond image.

The third section features Jamaican calypso and colourful silhouetted gyrating dancers, images suggesting Swinging 60s London rather than Swinging Kingston, Jamaica. Exoticism and sexuality are implied, but mutedly so. No overt reference is made to Blackness or Whiteness; the use of silhouettes in this section – at first in red, orange and lavender and then in brilliant blues and greens – removes black or white skincolour as a question, or at least distances it, in the soft liberal manner of much 60s progressivism.

Binder stated, "I wanted to use native dancers as a visual accompaniment (to the music) but the problem was how to do this without losing the formalised and graphic feeling which had been established by the animated dots." To animate dancing figures would have taken too long, so he decided to use live action silhouettes in colour. The dancers were photographed on ordinary black-and-white negative and Binder went to the Special Effects Department at Technicolor to ask them if it was possible "to convert the images to colour by printing them on to colour stock with the aid of selected filters". To his delight they thought it possible – with enough time. The technicians were dismayed to be informed that they had a little over a week. But the results were excellent.

The dance routine eventually dissolves into the final sequence which features three black, blind, male beggars. Just as Binder photographs the dancers so he shoots the three blind men, in silhouette. The silhouettes are bold and simple; the strong forms are in black, set against a moving animated background of colour (which shifts from blue to white to red to orange to red, and back to blue). Credits featured here include those for music, screenplay, and producers (his own quite large credit, together with animator Tony Bond's, occurs during the dance sequence). After the appearance of the director's name (Terence Young), the silhouetted beggars of the title sequence dissolve into the same beggars continuing their walk in the opening shot of live action – but now we can see that they are in Kingston.





My shot of the inside of a gun relates to a Binder signature: the white-spots-for-bullet-holes, spiral-for-a-gun-barrel sequences. My title puts his design into 'real life'. Not

many people are familiar with the inside of a gun, and there is the added ambiguity of its similarity to a camera shutter. The image of the gun signals the end of the initial

sequence of the film, a plane getaway ending in an explosion, and the entering into a passage of fantasy. The viewer enters the gun, to be fired out at the other side.



Here a tiny man fires a shot, and in response smoke is released from a large-scale woman's mouth. I shot film of a woman smoking against a blue screen, then fed the

imagery into the domino machine, which is a high-resolution computerised opticals device. One of the things digital opticals allows you to do is to enhance the

image – in this case to bring up the whiteness of the smoke. This type of precision could never have been achieved with the earlier film opticals.



In creating these surreal landscapes, filled with floating 3-D images of the hammer and sickle, I went back to my memories of the

scenery in the 'Dr Strange' comic books – particularly the Steve Ditko designs. I read these voraciously when I was at school in the late 60s

and early 70s. The idea was that Dr Strange would enter a different dimension, casting spells in a bizarre world of 60s psychedelia.



This transition to fantasy was exactly what I wanted. The huge sickle here is the graphic symbol of communism and the Cold

War, a floating object in a strange landscape, on which women with hammers smash statues. Enlarged to form hovering platforms,

these objects recall the type of setting found in the 'Dr Strange' comics. I brought together the elements: the eye, the woman, the sickle.



The colours were very important in creating a dream-like effect. They needed to be very rich. Looking back at the 60s

titles, they seem garishly bright and very kitsch. Tastes have changed. I wanted my backdrops to bear reference to 'You Only

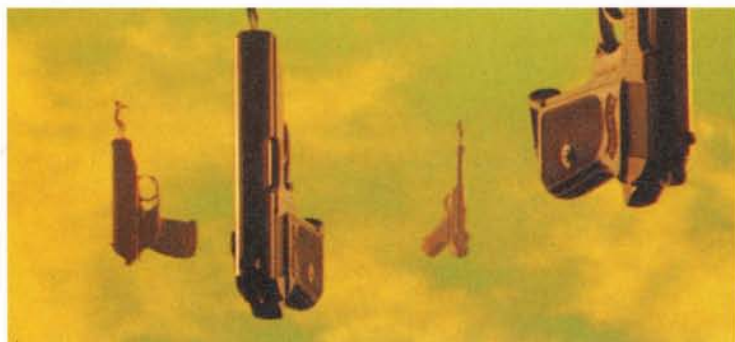
Live Twice', evoking our memory of it, but to be richer. Gold was used because of the title, and of course red for Russia.



My titles were designed to be a symbolic version of the main film. Though Binder only occasionally did this (for instance his girl with a gold

gun in 'The Man With The Golden Gun') it's my basis. For instance, the enemy in 'Goldeneye' is called Janus, (a reference to the double-

headed Roman god). I've used a twin-headed female to represent this Bond villain. A gun emerges from her mouth and retracts again.



As a painter (I was trained as an artist) I'm well aware of surrealist imagery. Though I never had any particular paintings in mind, I see the Domino process of image production as very similar to

surrealist collage. For the shot of the figures emerging from large floating guns, I shot the women and guns against bluescreen. The next step was to create the background and make the

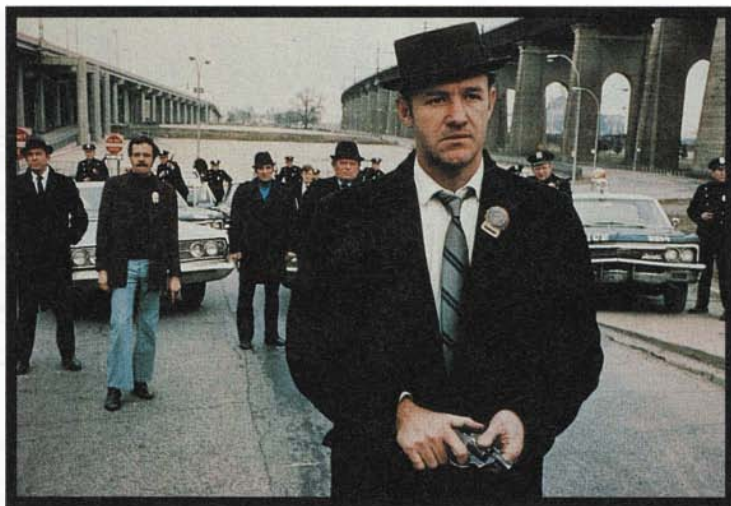
static frame of the women coming out of the gun. Then I flew the whole thing up in the air against the backdrop. Finally, to give it a sense of distance, I varied the contrast and increased the smoke.



Behind all these images the golden eye acts as a linking motif. It is a particularly powerful image, especially when seen in close-up on the large screen. I was making a symbolic association

between this potency and the force of the Goldeneye weapon, a key player in the film. In my sequence the eye opens and closes like a door, allowing the passage from one scene to the next.

Before the titles was an explosive high-action sequence, with a plane. When the titles end the viewer is spat out onto the road in the middle of a car-chase.



His early films helped re-invent popular Hollywood. So why is their director now out of favour? By Larry Gross

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO WILLIAM FRIEDKIN?

There are disastrous moments in the careers of some Hollywood directors that are emblems of a wider crisis: the enduring tension between the industry and individual talent. RKO's destruction of Orson Welles' poem-documentary *It's All True* (1942) and his removal from the editing of *The Magnificent Ambersons* was such a moment. And another was when Francis Ford Coppola's American Zoetrope studio collapsed under the weight of *One From the Heart*'s financial failure. These directors' careers are never quite the same again. And audiences suffer as well. It is as if Hollywood is inherently destructive towards the highfliers who threaten to square the vicious circle of commerce and serious art.

A slower, more mysterious trauma was somehow visited on the career of William Friedkin. Like Welles and Coppola, Friedkin was a *wunderkind*, an Oscar winner with Hollywood completely at his command when he was just 29 years old. He seemed to be perfectly positioned to make films that were at once serious, entertaining and highly commercial. Then something went wrong.

It's tough now even to grasp how completely Friedkin's two early successes, *The French Connection* (1971) and *The Exorcist* (1973), helped create the idiom of serious/popular Hollywood filmmaking over the last 25 years. *The French Connection* virtually invents the action movie as a visceral hurtling mechanism of sensation that sets narrative complexity aside in favour of non-psychological "tide". *The Exorcist* virtually invents the modern Hollywood A-budget special effects/horror cinema. The story of a 12-year-old girl possessed by the Devil, it helped bring

about, as a definition of the kinds of stories that people want to be told, the subsequent studio mantra of "ordinary people caught in extraordinary circumstances". More specifically, Friedkin, to convey his heroine's unholy power, created images of her ability to move objects in space that defied the laws of physics – which was both intrinsically cinematic and sensationally entertaining. One audience member forever marked by these images was Steven Spielberg, who borrowed Linda Blair's powers for the funny aliens and monsters in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* and *Jurassic Park*. I'm not exactly saying Friedkin is owed royalties on Spielberg's billions of dollars-worth of hits, but it's close.

Swerve to pulp

Friedkin's Hollywood career got going in his early twenties, with eminently serious and respectable literary adaptations of Mart Crowley's *The Boys in the Band* (1970) and Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (1968), and a beautiful period nostalgic comedy, *The Night They Raided Minsky's* (1968). All failed commercially. He then made a decisive swerve toward more disreputable pulp genre material. For good and for bad, that made all the difference. A whole generation of serious ambitious auteurs have followed the same path. An earlier generation of film-makers – such directors as William Wyler, Fred Zinnemann and George Stevens – considered power in Hollywood to mean the ability to reject purely commercial subject matters and to take up historical subjects, literary adaptations and socially conscious themes. Even so great a genre film-maker as John Ford took himself

most seriously when he adapted a John Steinbeck novel. Friedkin has all the earnestness of these men, and is clearly from the same literate, culturally sophisticated place, but he became utterly unapologetic about choosing more "low-brow" material.

Wages of Fear (1977, US Title: *Sorcerer*), *Cruising* (1980) and *To Live and Die in L.A.* (1985) are Friedkin's three strongest films after his early 70s glory days. *Wages of Fear*, a remake of Henri-Georges Clouzot's action thriller *La Salade de la peur* (1953) about men driving dynamite-laden trucks over bruising mountain terrain, has two significant distinctions: some of the most hair-raising, real, physical stunts in the history of cinema, and one of the most grimly pessimistic worldviews ever embedded within the framework of a film that purports to be commercial. Early on in the film, when impoverished Peruvian villagers riot on account of an explosion causing many casualties at a nearby oilfield, we are instructed by Friedkin's camera to view this as an almost purely irrational, animalistic howl of outrage, momentarily effective but doomed to be overcome by the next round of rightwing authoritarian violence.

Everyone driving the trucks is in flight from one act of desperate moral betrayal or another. As individuals they are barely differentiated – which brings the story dangerously close to monotony – but the physical world of the film has a churning and demonic vitality. It is both bleak and lush. Imagine the sensibility of some of Herzog's harsher landscape films joined with the more slashing, audience-grabbing editorial rhythms of Friedkin's earlier work, and one begins to appreciate the impact of this hugely



underrated movie. It cost \$21 million back in 1977 – in those days just about the equivalent of \$90 million today – and almost no one went to see it. Did that take something out of Friedkin personally? Was he “not the same” after that?

I'm not sure of the answer, but *Cruising* and *To Live and Die in L.A.* were nominally traditional police thrillers, to attempt to win back the audience *Wages of Fear* had alienated.

Cruising takes the gay neighbourhoods of Manhattan's West Greenwich Village as its exotic object of focus. A detective played by Al Pacino goes undercover, in all senses, pretending to be gay and living in the community, searching for a sexual psychopath who picks up men for one-night stands and then brutally murders them. Clearly what fascinated Friedkin in this pre-Aids era of gay liberation was the atmosphere of complete and unapologetic sexual license. He was attracted to the gay community's radical focus on pleasure. Friedkin reads almost all forms of social and institutional life as hopelessly riven by a component of corruption and dishonesty.

His heroes are not more moral than this environment. They are more out of control and impulsive. Their authenticity is defined as an irritable throwing-off of all restraints. Gay sex has that horrific status in *Cruising*. But the downside of this impulsiveness – in all Friedkin's movies – is the moment when freedom from constraint gyrates into total loss of control. This is what happens to William Petersen's treasury agent in *To Live and Die In L.A.*. His passion to capture a brilliant forger (Willem Dafoe) becomes a self-righteous obsession that destroys him and those he comes in contact with. The

nervous vitality at the heart of Friedkin's universe is in constant proximity to some truly weird sense of chaos, and it's that chaos that wins out.

What sets all of Friedkin's police films apart, beginning with *The French Connection*, is their source in filmic traditions of documentary social realism. In this respect he is relatively unmarked by the more self-conscious and ironic Hollywood action cinema of Howard Hawks, Robert Aldrich, Don Siegel and Sam Fuller, and more similar to non-American forays into these genres, represented in Italy by Francesco Rosi, in France by Clouzot, and most memorably perhaps in Japan by Akira Kurosawa's *High and Low*.

Dark vision

No particular purpose is served by disparaging Friedkin for projects like *The Guardian* or *Rampage*, films with substandard scripts and C-list casts. *Jade* is a mild upturn from these, a return to higher gloss film-making, from a so-so Ezterhas script, but what's the point of Friedkin proving that he can do a competent imitation of Paul Verhoeven? His best work has been drastically, even perversely personal. The question that persists is, if he was so strongly responsible for leading serious directors towards careers in highly commercial audience-friendly genres, how did his own films lose touch with these same audiences, and critics?

The brief answer is that Friedkin, as a “man of the 70s”, went on making genre films with an uncompromisingly dark view of man and society, at a time when that darkness grew increasingly unfashionable, first with the audiences,

Fear and ambition: Gene Hackman as Popeye Doyle in 'The French Connection', far left; the unnerving 'The

Exorcist', second left; the explosives truck in 'Wages of Fear', above left; Linda Fiorentino in 'Jade', above

and then with the (always craven) critics. When a Hollywood film-maker's sensibility starts to deviate strongly from the prevailing commercial norm, few critics or members of the audience follow. What the film-maker does wilfully and intentionally is frequently read as being an incompetent failure to imitate what everybody else is doing. Working in genres he helped popularise, it's been assumed that Friedkin wanted to deliver pulse-pounding audience escapism of the Spielberg-Cameron-Donner variety, only somehow he just didn't know how.

In a way the criticism is fair. Friedkin helped create a commercial norm, but it turned out to have its own thematic rigidity, of good guys walloping bad guys, that he could neither join nor entirely reject. Even his best work after *The Exorcist* has a certain muffled unsureness, as he wrestles with the irresolvable tensions between commerciality and seriousness. Call it arrogance, call it hope, call it pride. Friedkin thought he could give the audience what it wanted and please himself at the same time. If he delivered on sensational action sequences, then he could also get away with a painfully harsh view of the world. But times have really changed. Audiences, voting with their ticket purchases, keep telling Hollywood's decision-makers that difficult pleasures are in fact no fun at all.

Jade opens on 3 November and is reviewed on page 47 of this issue

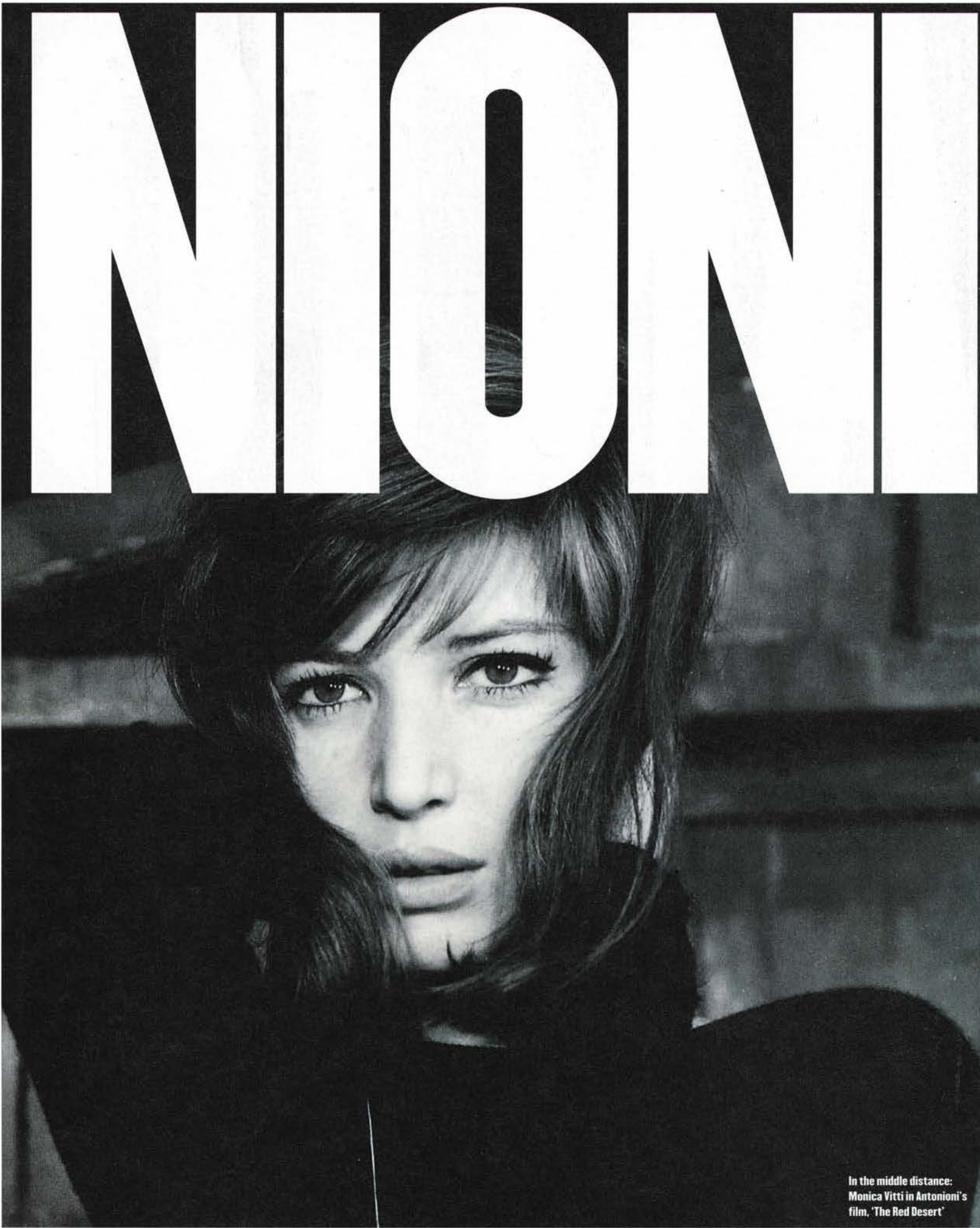
ANTO

BEFORE AND AFTER

His films with Monica Vitti have always excited but also puzzled audiences: 'L'avventura' was booed when it debuted at Cannes. What is the power of these 60s films where nothing apparently happens? Are they period pieces? Or have we not yet caught up with their newness?
By Geoffrey Nowell-Smith

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BY STILL POSTERS AND DESIGNS 14



In the middle distance:
Monica Vitti in Antonioni's
film, 'The Red Desert'

● The early 1960s was a great time for cinephiles. There was the old cinema, and there was the new. The old was Hollywood: not the Hollywood of new releases (good new American films were few and far between) but the Hollywood of the recent past – the great backlog of *film noir*, Mann and Boetticher Westerns, Tashlin/Lewis comedies, all still circulating around inner-city fleapits and in gaunt suburban Odeons on Sunday afternoons, to be hunted down relentlessly by neophyte zealots of the auteur theory. And the new? The new was also occasionally America (Cassavetes) but mainly Europe (Truffaut, Godard, Rivette, Fellini, Antonioni, Fassbinder), shortly to be joined by Latin America (Rocha) and Japan (Oshima). Hollywood, more than Europe, was where films had been made in the past: Europe and the rest of the world was where films were being made and would be made in the future.

Subsequent history has turned this simple vision upside down, and the auteur theory had a lot to do with it. For the auteur theory – a *theory*, yet – begat (or was godfather to) the movie brats, and the movie brats begat the New Hollywood, and the New Hollywood, like it or not, is the cinema today. As for what was the new cinema, there's precious little of it around. Some of its protagonists, like Rocha and Fassbinder, died young. Few of its survivors – Godard is the obvious exception – have renewed themselves, and it has few successors: Kieślowski and Kaurismäki, Edward Yang, not many others.

But the films of the now-no-longer-new cinema can still surprise one. 30 years on, they can still look modern; and even if one has seen them before, they can still look new. The pleasure of going back to films from the past is generally that of a return, return to the time one first saw the film or to the time of the film itself. This is especially true of films which have nostalgia built into them, such as those of Ford, Mizoguchi or Ophüls. But there are other films which have (for me) the capacity to annul that sense of a return, and present themselves as if they were completely new. I have had this experience on belatedly catching up with Rocha's *Barravento*, and on reseeing Cassavetes' *Shadows* and Godard's *A bout de souffle*. Most of all I have it with *L'avventura*.

L'avventura is of course a classic, made 35 years ago. As if to underline its classic status it is in black and white, a sure connotator nowadays of nostalgia. It gets off to a shaky start: a rather stilted conversation between a father and his grown-up daughter. But even that stilted conversation has an uncomfortable ring of truth; the embarrassment conveyed by it is a lifelike embarrassment, that of two characters who have grown apart, as parents and children did and do. From this moment on one is plunged into a world of sporadic, discontinuous conversations, of remarks that miss their target, of looks that do not engage, of relationships that develop erratically and form (rather than conform to) the structure of a plot. In what is shown or in how it is observed, *L'avventura* is a modern film. A modern film, but not, please God, a classic of modernism.

In the years since the early 60s, *L'avventura* – together with the other films Antonioni made with Monica Vitti, *La notte* (1961), *The Eclipse* (1962) and *The Red Desert* (1964) – has gone through the inevitable cycle: fashionability, neglect, return to fashion. Its rerelease in Britain coincides with the premiere of *Beyond the Clouds*, Antonioni's first feature for over ten years, and with a stream of retrospectives of the work that made the director's name an icon. This prompts the question: is Antonioni being revived, or embalmed? Are we looking at films which were destined to become classics and have now achieved their destiny, or at a more labile phenomenon, possibly just a fad, a re-evocation of the 60s similar to the digging up of Beatles outtakes?

Suddenly, nothing happened...

I would not want to take any bets on the success of the Antonioni revival. But then it would have been unwise to take bets on his success in the 60s either. *L'avventura* in fact nearly never made it to the screen at all. Halfway through filming the original producers went bankrupt. Cast and crew were marooned on a volcanic island, living on credit from reluctant lodging-house keepers while the director went back to Rome to negotiate a fresh start with a new producer. Shooting was held up for several weeks. Scenes supposed to take place in the summer were not shot until well into the autumn, giving a quite accidental mystery to the eerie light that suffuses the island sequences, as the idle-rich protagonists splash in the no-longer warm waters off the Sicilian coast. Then when the film was premiered in Cannes in May 1960, it was roundly booed by sections of the audience disappointed that the bizarre and unknown Monica Vitti



A world of sporadic, discontinuous conversations: Antonioni's 'L'avventura'

turned out to be the star of the film, rather than Lea Massari (the actress who plays the young woman saying goodbye to her father in the opening sequence). The critics too were divided. Penelope Gilliatt, at the time the recently appointed film critic of the *Observer* (and later a rather good writer on film for the *New Yorker*), proudly claimed to have slept through it and suspected others had done the same. (Though if she had really slept how could she know?) For every person who found the film miraculously exciting there was one who pronounced it deeply boring.

Even among Antonioni's fans, his films of the early 60s provoked puzzlement as well as excitement. What was the fascination of movies in which so little happened, or appeared to happen? And what were they actually about? If they were 'about' anything it was probably alienation – an idea made fashionable by existentialism and by the newly discovered *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of the young Karl Marx. And if they were not about alienation, did this mean they were about nothing – that is to say, not about anything or, indeed, about Nothing? There was a quasi-philosophical dimension to the debate which tended to obscure both their originality and the extent to which they remained in many ways quite conventional. *L'avventura* and *The Eclipse* were talked about as if they were *Waiting for Godot*, in which nothing does indeed happen and which is indeed a play about nothing. To understand their wider and more enduring appeal it is therefore necessary to strip away some of the rhetoric that surrounded them at the time they were released.

Real life drama

For a start, they are *not* films in which nothing happens. In *L'avventura*, over a period of a few days, Claudia (Vitti) experiences the loss of her best friend, enters into an affair with her friend's lover, and is betrayed by him (as she perhaps has betrayed her friend) but seems prepared to accept a reconciliation. In *La notte*, in less than 24 hours, Giovanni (Marcello Mastroianni) and Lidia (Jeanne Moreau) also experience the loss of a close friend, which triggers off a crisis in their relationship; both are tempted by adultery but decide against it, and they end up dubiously together. In *The Eclipse*, Vittoria (Vitti) terminates a longstanding relationship, enters into a frenzied affair with Piero (Alain Delon), but decides (or appears to decide) not to continue it. By the standards of ordinary life (if not necessarily the cinema) this is hardly nothing.

In Antonioni's presentation of them, however, these quite dramatic events are not dramatic at all. The disappearance of Anna in *L'avventura* might be suicide, it might be kidnapping or even murder (like the murder of Janet Leigh which dramatically disposes of the heroine early in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, which appeared the same year), but we are not shown what happens, nor is the mystery ever explained; nothing is ever more than a possibility, a shadow hanging over the plot. In *La notte* we do not learn that the dying friend, Tommaso, has actually died, until Lidia lets drop in conversation that a phonecall she received earlier was to tell her about his death. Nor does any drama attach to the crisis in the marriage or the tempted adulteries. The couple do not row, they are just palpably unhappy. When Lidia goes off in the car with Roberto, we see the car stop outside the hotel, and then move on, but we don't hear their conversa-

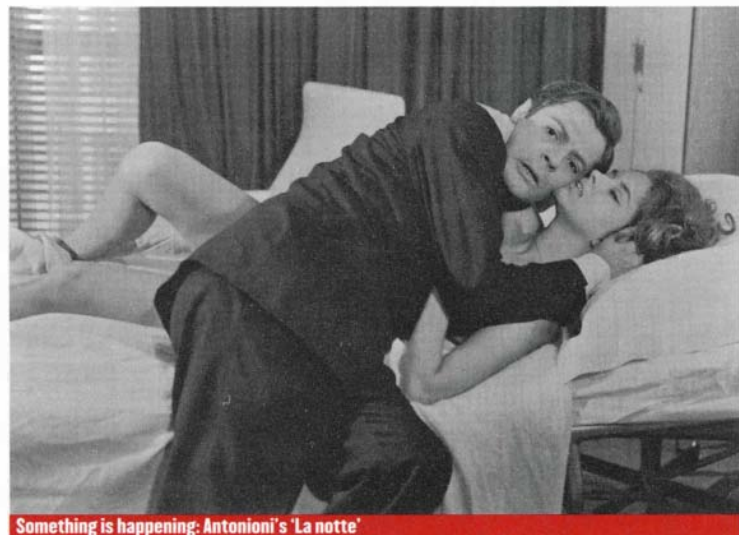
tion, nor can we even see their faces, which are obscured by the rain beating on the car windows as they talk. As for Giovanni's flirtation with Valentina (Vitti), it is just allowed to peter out after Lidia has eavesdropped on it. And in *The Eclipse* we assume that Vittoria and Piero have each decided to bring their affair to an end, but only because neither of them comes to the rendezvous they have set up.

It is not the case, therefore, that nothing has happened, but that the status of what has happened (and something undoubtedly has happened) remains uncertain. Narrative expectations are set up, and then defeated. (It is this, rather than mere boredom, which provoked the hostile reaction of the Cannes audience.) On the one hand this can be seen as elementary realism, a reproduction of the messiness and uncertainty of everyday life as against the conventional predictability of melodrama, and there is no doubt that part of the appeal of Antonioni's films lies in this lifelikeness. But the lifelikeness is also an effect of art, the result of a deliberate play with film conventions. What holds the rambling plot of *L'avventura* together is not what happens but the expectation of something happening – the return of Anna or an explanation of her disappearance – which if it were to happen would give the narrative sense, but since it *doesn't* happen leaves the story poised over an uncomfortable void. And in *The Eclipse* it is again the expectation of a resolution – that Piero's and Vittoria's affair will continue and be formally sealed as a 'happy end' – that holds the audience's attention during the extraordinary last sequence, in which time passes and the lovers never show. On the one side, something lifelike, two characters uncertain as to whether the affair they have drifted into is one they would like to continue. On the other, something which has nothing to do with Piero and Vittoria as people at all: a meditation on transience provoked by teasing the audience into expecting the story to do what stories usually do, and then not delivering.

Antonioni may underplay narrative in order to foreground something else, but he most definitely plays with it. From his first feature film, *Cronaca di un amore* in 1950, to *Identification of a Woman* in 1982, passing through *L'avventura* and *Blowup* (1966), recurrent reference is made to the mystery or detective format, in which the narrative is set in motion by a suspected crime, which the rest of the story then sorts out. The difference, of course, is that in Antonioni films (with the exception of the generally atypical *I vinti* in 1953) the mystery is *not* sorted out but is left in the air, a possibly important, possibly unimportant shadow hanging over the lives of the characters and keeping the audience in deliberately mild suspense. This could be seen as little more than a device, a thread on which to hang a set of concerns which are not so much non-narrative as anti-narrative. Antonioni's characters tend to live only in the present, carrying with them very little baggage from the past and with few if any ambitions for the future. They don't have historic grudges and they don't make projects. This makes them poor narrative material, since the stuff of narrative is motivation, and Antonioni's characters on the whole don't have it. Hence the need for an external thread on which to hang the story.

Evoking mystery, withholding facts

If this is the case – and I think it is – two questions are then raised. One is a further question about the status of the narrative and the other, which I shall deal with first, concerns the characters. Antonioni's characters are



Something is happening: Antonioni's 'La notte'



Suspended emotions: Antonioni's 'The Eclipse'

not entirely without motivation, and not entirely languid. Some of the men, in particular, are compulsively active. Piero is a dealer, frenziedly buying and selling shares on behalf of clients. But the deals mean nothing to him and there is more than a hint that his sex life is like his work; he picks up women and drops them as easily as he trades in and out of any other commodity. Thomas in *Blowup* is equally compulsive; life for him is a flurry of photosessions, of bending objects – especially models – to his will. But none of these characters, whether active or passive, blind or observant, knows where they are going, unless something happens, provoked by the narrative, to give them pause. They have few social, family, or workplace ties and live relatively unconstrained by conventional moral codes. This does not mean that they have no morality, but rather that they have to make their own moral choices as they go along, which they sometimes do and sometimes don't. It is the seeming rootlessness of these characters, accentuated by a *mise en scène* which isolates them within the frame, which has given rise to the label attached to them: 'alienated'. There is also something distinctively modern about it, in the sense that they inhabit situations which sociologists, then as now, characterise as typical of modern societies.

The modernity of Antonioni's characters may have reflected a sociological commonplace, but for the cinema it was something new. For reasons too complicated to go into here, the mainstream cinema was deeply resistant to modernity in this form. A kind of existential listlessness occasionally surfaces in American films of the 40s and 50s (in *They Live by Night* and other Nicholas Ray films, for example), but only as a property of lone individuals. It is not generalised across an entire social world, nor is it disabling to individuals. The American hero remains an action hero and his actions are endowed with meaning. But in the entropic world of Antonioni's films there is little scope for meaningful action for the hero or heroine (if indeed there *are* heroes and heroines in these films) to engage in – unless, of course, like Mark in *Zabriskie Point* or Robertson in *The Passenger*, they invent new roles for themselves to perform.

Antonioni's characters are not free-standing entities. They are brought into being by story and *mise en scène*, and it is to these levels that we must return to explain what in fact makes the films distinctive. Narrative tends to be described at two levels: that of a narrated content, and that of the way it is narrated. The classic examples of a disjunction between these two levels are the Oedipus myth and the detective story, in each of which there is an order of events (a murder is committed and the murderer is brought to justice) and an order of presentation (there has been a killing and the nature of it has to be investigated). The resolution of the narrative comes when the two levels are brought together and the truth is revealed.

Antonioni, as already mentioned, enjoys playing with the detective story format. But he plays with it sceptically. Mysteries are evoked but never solved and the narration never reaches a moment of truth produced by the solution. The audience never learns what happened to Anna in *L'avventura* (nor do the other characters) or who killed Locke and kills Robertson in *The Passenger*. Even in films which do not use the detective story format, facts are withheld from the audience or the characters or both – not so that they can be revealed in due time but because they ►

◀ have no real pertinent existence. The world of the films is the transient world the audience sees, not a more solid world underlying it and acting as guarantor of its truth. In the epigraph to Sam Rohdie's book on Antonioni, the director is quoted as saying "the world, the reality in which we live... is invisible, hence we have to be satisfied with what we see." Or in computer language, What You See Is What You Get.

Space is the place

What you get is a narration, and a narration of a very pared-down kind – which consists of a series of views of spaces where characters enter, perform their actions and depart. In conventional film narration, spaces are defined by the characters who occupy them and by the actions performed in them, and the succession of spaces (the editing of shots) is determined by the continuity of the action. In Antonioni's films space pre-exists the action, and asserts its reality independently of the action performed within it. Although there are conventional matched-action cuts in the films, there are also many shots which begin or end with no character in frame at all (most notably in *The Eclipse*). The character makes an appearance in the shot, redefines the space as the space of an action, then disappears, restoring to the space its original independent reality. What anchors the narration is not a story but a composition.

This foundational quality of the filmic space means that the action of the film often takes the form of an interaction between the characters and the spaces they move in and out of. Characters are often presented as more sensitive to their environment than to other characters. Landscape and the elements – mud, rain, deserts – are powerful determinants of the action, but so are smaller spaces, the emptiness or constriction of a room, the closeness of a blank wall. The physical prevails over the social, and landscape cuts characters down to size. In *The Red Desert* Corrado (Richard Harris) tries to persuade a group of refinery workers to join him on a drilling expedition to Patagonia. The workers listen but are not convinced. The camera lingers on their faces, traces the lines of brightly painted pipework, focuses on huge glass jars used for storing acid. The sheer presence of the immediate environment is overpowering, and against it Corrado's vision seems insubstantial, a mere will-o'-the-wisp.

Many of the features of Antonioni's films can be found in other films of the 60s and after. Just occasionally they can be found earlier. The listless characters of *L'avventura*, *La notte* and *The Eclipse* are to some extent prefigured in Fellini's films of the 50s (particularly strong is the similarity between Mastroianni-Marcello in *La dolce vita* and Mastroianni-Giovanni in *La notte*). The *Nouvelle Vague* also brought in its crop of existential heroes who invent their own morality. The sense of landscape and filmic space as preceding narrative is prevalent in Ozu. Narratives which do not resolve can be found in *film noir*. But so concentrated a challenge to the norms of narrative-as-action is unique in the cinema (or at least in the kind of cinema that gets theatrical release). Antonioni in a real sense invented a new cinema, and very often where features of that cinema recur, it is (for good or ill) a result of his influence. Yet his influence has been indirect. Other directors of his generation have been successfully plundered for ideas and mannerisms, and something of their work survives in the work of their imitators – Bergman in Woody Allen, early Godard in Tarantino, the Godard of '68 in a whole host of film-makers who took up his slogan of "making films politically". Antonioni, however, has not proved easy to imitate. His films represent an opening up of cinema to new possibilities of vision, but they also involve a closing down, since the vision they embody is so precise, and that precision cannot be manneristically reproduced. Little bits of what might seem to be his manner permeate a number of the art films of the 60s, as part of a generalised rebellion against the tyranny of the rule-book. But when audiences in the late 70s rebelled in their turn against unfocused artiness, the valuable part of Antonioni's lesson could not be absorbed. His was very much a cinema of its time, marked by the emergence of a public which had begun to grow tired of conventional cinema and expected something different. The world into which *Beyond the Clouds* is being released is a different one. Audiences are smaller, and their demands are more focused, though also less ambitious. But in other respects the way the world has changed only confirms the vision of it prospected in Antonioni's films of the 60s and 70s. The films may be a throwback to a past era of cinema. But what they propose is still new.

An Antonioni season is at the NFT from 25-28 November. *L'avventura* is re-released on 21 November

FILMOGRAPHY

MICHELANGELO ANTONIONI

BORN FERRARA, ITALY, 29.09.1912

Unless otherwise stated, Antonioni directed.

Antonioni's first experience of filming was in an insane asylum, shortly after he graduated. He described the lasting memory of the moment when he switched on the lights and started to film. "The mad desperately tried to protect themselves from the light as from a prehistoric monster which attacked them." The film was never finished. He also made a short, during his brief course at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome in 1941-2, in which a single actress played two women, one blackmailing the other.

1942

LES VISITEURS DU SOIR (THE DEVIL'S ENVOYS)

Director: Marcel Carné

Assistant director: Antonioni

I DUE FOSCAMI

Director: Enrico Fulchignoni

Assistant director: Antonioni

Scriptwriters: Antonioni, Mino Doletti,

Enrico Fulchignoni

UN PILOTA RITORNA

Director: Roberto Rossellini

(Antonioni was co-scriptwriter)

1947

GENTE DEL PO (PEOPLE OF THE PO)

Italy/9 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni

Begun in 1943, this was interrupted by the war. What's more, a mistake was made developing the negative, making much of the footage useless.

CACCIA TRAGICA (THE TRAGIC PURSUIT)

Director: Giuseppe de Santis

(Antonioni was co-scriptwriter)

1948

N.U. (NETTEZZA URBANA)

Italy/9 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni

1949

NON CI CREDO! (SUPERSTIZIONE) (SUPERSTITION)

Italy/10 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni

Though Antonioni originally directed this, shots were added and it was re-edited, and Antonioni disowned it.

L'AMOROSA MENZOGNA (LIES OF LOVE)

Italy/10 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni

1950

SETTE CANNE UN VESTITO

Italy/10 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni

LA VILLA DEI MOSTRI Italy/10 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni

LA FUNIVIA DEL FALORIA Italy/10 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni

CRONACA DI UN AMORE Italy/100 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni, Daniele D'Anza,

Silvio Giovaninetti, Francesco Maselli,

Piero Tellini

1951

LO SCEICCO BIANCO (THE WHITE SHEIK)

Director: Federico Fellini

(Antonioni co-wrote the treatment)

1953

I VINTI (THE VANQUISHED) Italy, 110 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni, Suso Cecchi

D'Amico, Diego Fabbri, Turi Vasile,

Giorgio Bassani

Production Company: Film Costellazione



'The Passenger'

The French judiciary held up material shot in France at customs – participants in the (true) events inspiring the episode had protested – and the film was released in France in 1963 without that episode.

LA SIGNORA SENZA CAMELIE (US TITLE: THE LADY WITHOUT CAMELIAS) Italy/105 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni, Suso Cecchi

D'Amico, Francesco Maselli, P. M.

Pasinetti

Production company: Ente Nazionale

Industrie Cinematografiche

L'AMORE IN CITTA Italy/110 minutes

Directors: Antonioni, Dino Risi,

Federico Fellini, Francesco Maselli,

Alberto Lattuada, Carlo Lizzani

Production Company: Faro Film

A portmanteau film. Antonioni's episode is *Tentato suicidio* (Attempted Suicide).

"Except perhaps for two truly moving cases, they tried to convince me that they had really wanted to die, that they had repeated the gesture several times, and that, all in all they had been unlucky not to have succeeded."

1955

LE AMICHE (THE GIRL FRIENDS)

Italy/105 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni, Suso Cecchi

D'Amico, Alba De Cespedes

Production Company: Trionfalcine

Based on the novel *Tra donne sole* by Cesare Pavese.

UOMINI IN PIÙ

Director: Nicolò Ferrari

Producer: Antonioni

A short on overpopulation and emigration.

1957

IL GRIDO (THE CRY) Italy

Screenplay: Antonioni

Production company: S.P.A.

Cinematografica and Robert Alexander

Productions (New York)

"I saw it again some time ago and I was amused to find myself confronted with such nakedness, so much loneliness, like on those mornings when we are shocked by the face we see in the mirror."

QUESTO NOSTRO MONDO Italy/77 minutes

Production Company: B.M.B., Milano

Later re-edited and distributed as *Questo meraviglioso mondo*.

1958

NEL SEGNO DI ROMA (SIGN OF THE GLADIATOR)

Director: Guido Brignone

In 1958, Antonioni was very short of money (because of the theatrical activities he was engaged in with Monica Vitti, et al) and did uncredited work on other people's films. (Hence *La tempesta*, below.) He might have taken over direction of *Nel segno di Roma* after Brignone's death.

LA TEMPESTA

Director: Alberto Lattuada

(Antonioni was second unit director)

1960

L'AVVENTURA Italy/France/145 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni, Elio Bartolini,

Tonin Guerra

Production company: Cino Del Duca

Produzioni Cinematografiche Europee,

Société Cinématographique Lyre

1961

LA NOTTE Italy/France/121 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni, Ennio Flaiano,

Tonino Guerra

Production company: Nepi Film, Sofitedip (Paris), Silver Films (Paris)

"Throughout the various stages of work on this project, I have done nothing but strip it of all that it was originally.

Almost all the characters were eliminated, only the two main characters were left over, and as you could see, even they were stripped naked."

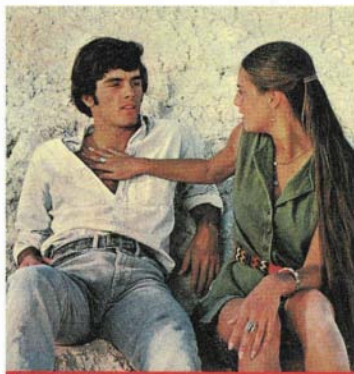
1962

L'ECLISSE (THE ECLIPSE)

Italy/France/125 minutes

Screenplay: Antonioni, Tonino Guerra,

Elio Bartolini, Ottiero Ottieri



Production Company:
Interopa/Cineriz/Paris Film Production
"In Florence to see and shoot the eclipse
of the sun.... Total stillness. All I could
think of was that during an eclipse,
emotions probably stopped as well."

1963
IL FIORE E LA VIOLENZA Italy/France
Directors: Antonioni, Jean Renoir,
François Reichenbach
Production Company: Cineriz
A portmanteau film. Antonioni's
contribution was essentially a
repackage of *Un delitto* (the third
episode from *I vinti*).

1964
DESERTO ROSSO (THE RED DESERT)
Italy/France/120 minutes
Screenplay: Antonioni, Tonino Guerra
Production company: Film Duemila,
Francoriz (France)
"I dyed the grass around the shed at the
edge of the marsh to reinforce the sense
of desolation, of death. The landscape
had to be rendered truthfully: when trees
are dead, they have that colour."

1965
I TRE VOLTI (THREE FACES OF WOMAN)
 Italy/120 minutes
 Directors: Antonioni, Mauro Bolognini,
 Franco Indovina
 Production company: Dino De Laurentiis
 Cinematografica
 Antonioni's episode was *Il provino*, though
 it's often referred to as *Prefazione*.

ANTONIONI, STORIA DI UN AUTORE
Director: Gianfranco Mingozzi
(Antonioni appears as himself)

1966
BLOWUP Great Britain/111 minutes
Screenplay: Antonioni, Tonino Guerra,
Edward Bond
Production company: Metro Goldwyn
Mayer
Script from a story by Julio Cortazar.
"I want to recreate reality in an
abstract form."
"The young people among whom my film
is situated are all aimless, without any
drive but to reach that aimless freedom.
Which for them means marijuana, sexual
perversion, anything..."

1970
ZABRISKIE POINT USA/110 minutes
Screenplay: Antonioni, Fred Gardner,
Sam Shepard, Tonino Guerra, Clare
Peploe
Production company: Metro Goldwyn
Mayer
"It was the discovery of the actual place



called Zabriskie Point, in the heart of Death Valley, which provided the shock around which this work is crystallised. The story of the boy who steals an aeroplane and is killed by the police is something that actually happened."

1972
CHUNG KUO aka CHUNG KUO CINA Italy
Production Company: RAI
Radiotelevisione Italiana
“I remember once at Su Chow, I wanted to shoot a scene of a marriage. My interpreter told me that at the moment in Su Chow no one was getting married. ‘All we need,’ I said, ‘is a boy and a girl in order to reconstruct a marriage scene.’ He concluded however, that it would not be right to feign a marriage given that no one, in reality, was getting married.”

1975
PROFESSIONE: REPORTER (THE PASSENGER)
 Italy/France/Spain
 Screenplay: Antonioni, Mark Peploe,
 Peter Wollen
 Production company: Compagnia
 Cinematografica Champion (Roma), Les
 Films Concordia (Paris), C.I.P.I.
 Cinematográficas (Madrid)
 "If you can look closely, there are two
 documentaries in this film, Locke's on
 Africa, and mine on him."

1980
IL MISTERO DI OBERWALD (THE OBERWALD MYSTERY)
 Italy/West Germany/129 minutes
 Screenplay: Antonioni, Tonino Guerra
 Production Company: RAI
 Radiotelevisione Italiana, Polytel
 International
 Adaptation of the play *L'Aigle à deux têtes*
 by Jean Cocteau. "I thought of *L'Aigle à deux têtes*, not because it was a work that appealed to me, but because it seemed as good a vehicle as any for trying out television cameras, which for years I had wanted to do."

1982
IDENTIFICAZIONE DI UNA DONNA (IDENTIFICATION OF A WOMAN) Italy/France/131 minutes
 Screenplay: Antonioni, Gerard Brach,
 Tonino Guerra
 Production company: Iter Film s.p.a./RAI
 Radiotelevisione Italiana (Rete 2),
 Gaumont

1983
RENAULT 9 Ad-spot for Italian television
RITORNO A LISCA BIANCA Italy/9 minutes
A return to an island featured in
L'avventura.

1984
ROOM 666 US/45 minutes
 Director: Wim Wenders
 (Antonioni appears as himself)
FOTOROMANZA Italy/4 minutes
 Videoclip for RAI 3

1989
KUMBHAMELA
A short: images and music from India.

1990
II CIURMA (THE CREW)
Executive Producer: Martin Scorsese
Projected but never shot.
LE CITTÀ DEI MONDIALI:ROMA Italy/8 minutes
Episode of *Le città dei Mondiali*.

1992
NOTO, MANDORLI, VULCANO, STROMBOLI, CARNEVALE
Italy/8 minutes
Five short episodes: Noto is a town
featured in *L'avventura*.

1995
PAR-DELÀ LES NUAGES (BEYOND THE CLOUDS)
Italy/France/Germany/113 minutes
Directors: Antonioni, Wim Wenders
Screenplay: Antonioni, Tonino Guerra,
Wim Wenders
Production company: Sunshine, Ciné B,
France 3 Cinéma, Cecchi Gori
Group/Tiger Cinematografica, Road
Movies Zweite Produktionen GmBh
Based on Antonioni's collection of short
stories *Quel Bowling sul Tevere*.
*Where running times cannot be confirmed
satisfactorily, they have been omitted*

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CABARET

IN THE ARMS OF ANOTHER

RONAN BENNETT

This May in 'Sight and Sound'.

Ronan Bennett published his first diary instalment. He was juggling several not yet finalised projects: *'A Further Gesture'*, to be produced by Chris Curling and directed (perhaps) by Arthur Penn, with Stephen Rea as an escaped IRA prisoner on the run in the US; a series for the BBC entitled *'The Crimes of Harry d'Souza'*; and *'A Lake of Ashes'*, another feature script. Here is the second instalment.

Tuesday 4 April Chris Curling, Phil Robertson and I arrive back in London from our meeting with Arthur Penn in New York. I have more work to do on *A Further Gesture*; Chris has to sort out the film's finances. He has meetings over the next couple of weeks with possible investors, including Channel 4. I am getting anxious about timing. Arthur came in on the understanding we will be filming this summer. At home look through mail and messages. Nothing from David Thompson at the BBC about *The Crimes of Harry d'Souza*, the script he commissioned as a possible pilot for a serial. Fax him: "What should I read from your silence?"

Monday 10 April David Thompson calls to say he likes *Harry d'Souza*. The problem, he goes on, is finding a way to make it. There is apparently a cash crisis at the BBC, which among other things has reduced the money available for serials. But he has a suggestion: would I be prepared to recast the pilot as a single film? There are still some slots available, but I'd have to get it done quickly. We agree to meet next week with his colleague Elinor Day.

Wednesday 12 April Call Chris, who has just returned from Paris where he has been meeting investors. He isn't leaping with

confidence – the investors weren't talking about putting up that much money and seemed only interested in French-speaking territories. We won't hear anything definite until after Easter. My anxieties about Arthur and the start-date continue to rise. **Tuesday 18 April** Finish the revision of *A Further Gesture*, incorporating Arthur's notes, and drop it off at Chris' house. He's concerned about the budget, which now looks like being £1 million more than he'd thought. Still nothing positive from the investors. At least Channel 4's David Aukin's enthusiasm is undiminished. I ask if we are going to be able to film in the summer. Chris mumbles something.

Friday 21 April Home all day working with the BBC's Robert Cooper on revisions to *A Lake of Ashes*.

Saturday 22 April Newspapers full of stories about the BBC cash crisis – no new dramas, arts, documentaries. In the evening, off with Chris and Phil to the Tricycle to see Stephen Rea in *Uncle Vanya*. Chris tells me two potential backers have both passed on *A Further Gesture*. Stephen in good form and looking forward to working with Arthur Penn.

Tuesday 25 April David Aukin calls to say there are one or two things in the revision of *A Further Gesture* that he doesn't think work and would I look at them again? He says he hopes to get the whole thing sewn up at Cannes. "If not, then we're in trouble." Call Arthur. He picks up the same points in the script David didn't like. If two people independently take a strong objection to the same thing, it's time to look again at what you've done. Tell Arthur I'll have a new set of revisions



ready before Cannes.

Thursday 27 April Meet David Thompson and Elinor Day at Centre House. The first thing David says is: "As you know, things have got worse since we last spoke." However, if I can change the existing version of *Harry d'Souza* into a single film, he thinks he may be able to find a slot for it. I don't know, but it seems a shame to give up now. Scriptwriting always seems to involve encounters with false summits: just when you think you're there, they tell you to plant your flag another few hundred metres up the mountain. David says that if it is to stand a chance of being made this financial year, I will have to work fast. Decide to call the new script *Face* – a 'face' being a name, a villain.

Tuesday 9 May Fax arrives from Chris. Some readers' reports have come in. They're not encouraging. By general consent the script is "too bleak", apparently. Perhaps I should rethink the ending. I get fed up and call to tell him so.

Elinor calls: if I can get *Face* in quickly it stands a better chance of being made. I say by 22 May.

Friday 26 May Most of the last three weeks has been spent writing *Face* and reworking *Gesture*. Chris, back from Cannes, is sounding very positive about getting the film financed quickly. I ask him if this is just post-Cannes syndrome. He says no, that the people he spoke to were "really interested". We'll see. I'm getting more anxious about Arthur. In the last couple of calls with him, he's asked how things are going and there has been apprehension and a hint of impatience in his voice. I can't blame him. He's in New York, and everything's happening on this side of the Atlantic; although it seems to be progressing well enough it must seem to him as though nothing is moving. David Aukin rings to say that Cannes had gone very well. "I think we're within days rather than weeks of putting the finances together." Really? "Yes. Fingers crossed."

Monday 5 June Chris rings to say that one of the investors he had met in Cannes, Nippon Film Development and Finance (among other things, they were involved in *The Crying Game* and *Map of the Human Heart*) had contacted him after reading the script and have expressed interest in coming in. Things coming together, Chris says, getting there. Later Chris rings again, this time to say ►

In the faxes I sent Arthur I now see that my tone was that of the lover about to be deserted

◀ that when he had called Arthur to bring him up to date, Arthur told him that unless a deal was in place by Friday – this Friday – he was going to accept another film. In one way this news doesn't take me by surprise. Arthur thought the film would be shooting in July when we first talked to him (so did I). Now it isn't even certain to go in September. Chris gets back to work: he doesn't know if we can get the deal together by Friday, but he's hoping that Arthur will be flexible. He needs another week.

Tuesday 6 June I call Arthur and tell him I hope we can get the deal sorted out soon so that he won't leave the project. I think I can tell in his voice that he wants to do our film but that he feels things have dragged on long enough. I ask if Friday is the absolute deadline. Arthur says no, that if it goes into next week he'll stay with us. But he is adamant he wants to see a deal by then. I relay this to Chris. Chris seems quite confident about the way the money is working out – apparently there is serious interest from Nippon Film and another investor. Perhaps in the end Arthur's ultimatum will have served a useful purpose if it concentrates people's minds.

Friday 9 June Arthur's notional deadline comes and goes without the deal materialising. But Chris has had a meeting with Nippon Film and thinks something can be worked out. When?

Monday 12 June Chris calls to say that he has meetings booked this week with all our main investors – Channel 4, Nippon Film, Road Movies (Berlin) and the Irish Film Board, and that by Friday morning we should be in a position to tell Arthur the deal is in place. He faxes Arthur a breakdown of the film's proposed funding. I call Arthur and talk to him for about 15 minutes, urging him to stay with us, telling him that he will see from Chris' fax how close we are. After this call I feel slightly more optimistic. Chris also slightly more optimistic after having talked to Arthur, who, he says, seemed reasonably impressed with the situation.

Near midnight, Chris calls again. Not a happy man. He'd talked to Arthur again, who seemed to have changed his mind about the deadline. I call Arthur, repeating over and over that by the end of the week a deal will be

in place. "You say that, Ronan, but I've seen these things come and go a thousand times." And he's right, of course. Who am I to try to teach Arthur Penn to suck eggs? We talk for 15 or 20 minutes. He explains that he can't be sure *Gesture* is going to go and if he doesn't commit himself to the other film he could end up with no film to direct this year. "And I can't have that. I don't have the lifespan not to work."

Tuesday 13 June All is not yet lost, apparently. Jenne Casarotto, my agent, calls to say she has spoken to Johnny Planco, Arthur's New York agent. The situation with Arthur, she says, is not entirely settled. Jenne says that if we are able to get something to Arthur by Friday – something firm – we may still get him. I ring Chris and pass this on. He says he'll get on to it.

Wednesday 14 June Call Chris to see how things are going. He is in reasonably good mood. He says he has spoken to Road Movies who confirmed they were still interested in coming in with or without Arthur. The meeting with Nippon Film goes ahead as planned tomorrow. There may still be a chance of keeping Arthur on board if we can finalise the deal by Friday.

Thursday 15 June BBC Summer Party for writers at the Chelsea Physic Gardens. Will Wyatt makes a speech about how much money the BBC is putting into drama and entertainment. I try to reconcile this with what I've been hearing. Notice more than a couple of BBC producers gazing at their shoes. Talk to Elinor – she says she has been resisting the temptation to phone me looking for *Face*, now several weeks late. Plead pressure from other quarters and promise the script soon.

Call Chris when I get home. "Well, Nippon Film are in," he says. The meeting with Road Movies is scheduled for tomorrow morning, but it looks positive. With the film fully financed, he and Channel 4 will be able to fax a firm offer to Arthur tomorrow.

Friday 16 June Chris calls and reads out the fax to Arthur. "Dear Arthur, We have completed negotiations on the financing of *A Further Gesture* and are in a position to proceed immediately..." I fax Arthur saying how much I hope he'll be able to direct *Gesture*.

Saturday 17 June Ring Chris. He hasn't heard anything and sounds a little pessimistic.

Sunday 18 June At about 8.30am the phone rings. I can't catch who it is so say cheerily, "Hello." "Ronan, it's Chris. I said he's pulled out." This is sad. There's nothing I can say. When I put the phone down I feel like the man in the Hamlet ad. If I were a smoker I'd be reaching for my cigar right now.

Bed. I reflect on how the structures of this business are destructive of any kind of collaborative spirit. Because decisions are so slow in the making, no one wants to make firm commitments too far in advance. Everyone wants to hedge their bets, waiting to see if promises will come true, waiting to see if something better will come along. The uncertainty – actors dropping out, directors quitting, movies falling through at the last minute – not only encourages people to keep their options open for as long as possible, but makes it practically essential to professional survival that they do so. Can't wait to get back to my novel. Chris, meanwhile, has to start looking for another director and hoping he can keep the finances in place.

Tuesday 27 June Finally get *Face* finished. Reviewing the faxes I sent Arthur I see that my tone was similar to that of the lover about to be deserted. You don't want to discard all dignity and appear as if you are on your knees, pleading with the one you love not to go, but that is – in essence – what these faxes were all about. I mention this to a friend and ask what the agony aunt in *Cosmo* might advise: "Console yourself in the arms of another," she says. Where do we find another?

Thursday 29 June Meeting with David Aukin at Channel 4 to discuss *A Lake of Ashes* with Robert Cooper and Barnaby Spurrier. *Ashes* took a bit of bashing from David – he said I talked a better and more interesting script than I had produced, but he would be prepared to develop the script further "to help Ronan get there".

Friday 21 July Back from Malawi where I've been combining a holiday with some research for a novel. Ring Chris to find out what news about *Gesture*. Not bad. A story appeared in *Variety* about Arthur's departure and CSL was

inundated with calls from agents suggesting their clients. Among them is the Romanian-born director Robert Dornhelm, whose film *Echo Park* I remember seeing and liking.

Tuesday 25 July Off to Television Centre to see Elinor Day and David Thompson. They like *Face* a lot, they say, but ask me to look at the beginning and the ending, "otherwise keep the structure the same". David says he'd like to make it but who knows what will be possible this year? Come away feeling reasonably hopeful.

Thursday 27 July Watch a VHS of Robert Dornhelm's film, *Requiem for Dominic*, set in Romania during the chaotic aftermath of Ceaucescu's overthrow. The characterisation and storyline seem to me somewhat underdeveloped, but there's no mistaking the film's urgency and drama. It's strong and sticks in the mind. Phil at CSL says they are arranging for Robert Dornhelm to come over from the US, where he is now living and working.

Tuesday 8 August Finish the rewrite of *Face*, call Elinor. In the evening I meet Robert Dornhelm with Chris. We talk about *Requiem for Dominic* (which he says they shot without a script and with non-professional actors). He's reading different drafts of *Gesture* and wants to meet tomorrow to discuss things more fully. We drop Robert off at his hotel, then Chris drives me home. I ask if we can still raise the money. Chris now has to go back to our investors and find out if they're interested in the new package. Who knows?

Wednesday 9 August Robert, Chris and I sit in Chris' garden and have a long general talk about the script, about what I'm trying to say, and about the practicalities of filming so late in the year – realistically the earliest we could be in production is October, more likely November. Filming in Ireland will be bad enough, but what about New York in December/January? Robert suggests I think about setting the story in Los Angeles, where the weather will be kinder and many elements – particularly the Hispanic community – will be just as easy to find.

That afternoon we have a meeting at Channel 4: everyone seems happy with the new package and (most importantly ►

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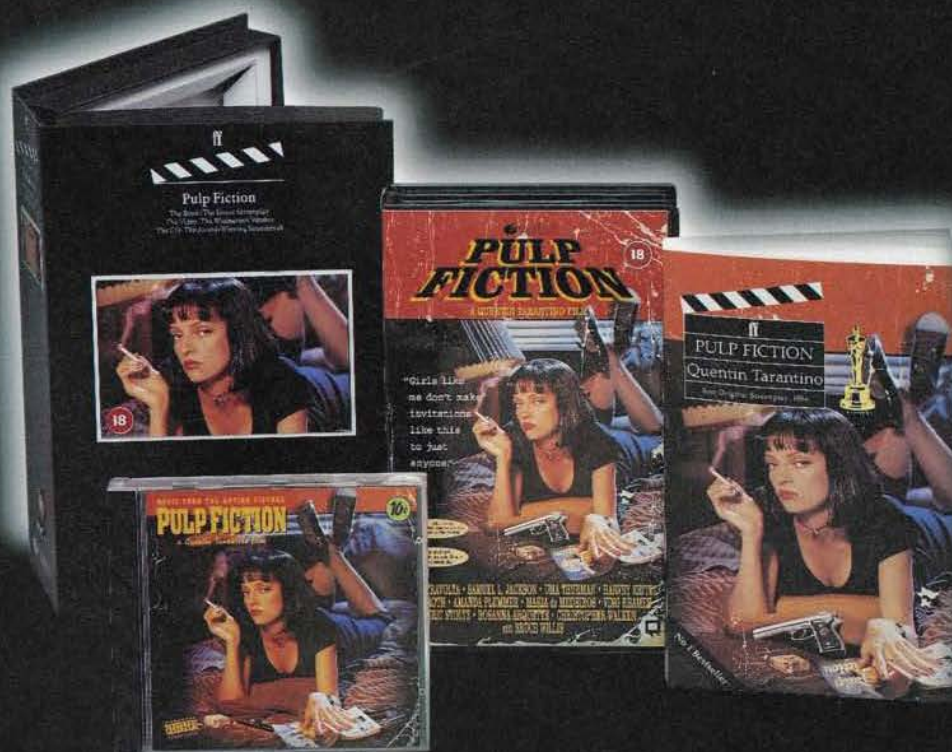
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My dearest wish now is to sign off as soon as possible. I am aware of energy levels slipping

◀ for immediate purposes) there is funding for a kind of pre-pre-production.

Thursday 10 August Stephen Rea calls. He'd met Robert Dornhelm and wants to know if I'm happy. I say yes. So we're both happy. "We can't have two Belfast men being happy," Stephen says.

Elinor rings to say how much she likes the second draft of *Face*. She has some notes – not many. If I can incorporate the changes into the script by Saturday she'll give David that version. If not, she'll give him the version she has with her notes.

Friday 11 August Can't sleep with this terrible heat – worse in London than it was in Malawi. Up at 6.15 and work on *Face*, taking into account Elinor's notes. Finish and arrange for a bike to take the revised draft to the BBC.

Later Chris rings to say that yesterday he and Robert had a meeting with Nippon Film. They lobbied hard and will be meeting again next week. Chris says he'll be in Dublin, New York and LA with Robert over the next two weeks.

Pack for my trip to Zaire; further research for the novel.

Tuesday 22 August Back from Zaire. Call Chris. The signs are good. He and Robert have been in Ireland to talk to crews, designers and actors. However, Nippon Film isn't looking too hopeful, and if we have to go elsewhere it will almost certainly mean a delay in shooting – or in shooting in two blocks, before and after Christmas. Arrange with Robert Dornhelm to see him in a couple of weeks to discuss script changes.

Sunday 3 September Message from Elinor to say that David likes the new draft of *Face*. The problem, as always, is where the money is to come from. It looks increasingly less like we will be able to make *Face* before the new financial year. This is really sad news, but not unexpected. What can you do except shrug?

Monday 4 September Drive to CSL offices – traffic dreadful because of the tube strike. Pick up Robert Dornhelm and drive to the M4, heading for a little village where a friend of Phil's has a cottage. Robert and I will work here away from the phones on the script. We talk generally at first, sifting through the earlier drafts to see what has been lost that perhaps

we should have retained. All the time Robert emphasises that although there are people all around pitching in their ideas, I should tell the story the way I want. This is good to hear. The whole thing is easy-going, relaxed. I write and Robert cooks.

Tuesday 19 September I thought I'd be able to finish the rewrite of *Gesture* in a few days, but it has taken much longer, partly because the nearer it gets to a shooting script, the more precise it has to be. I now have to make up my mind about lines in earlier drafts about which I felt doubtful. Do they stay in or go out?

Partly the delay has been caused by – notwithstanding what Robert said about telling the story the way I want – the number of notes and comments, often conflicting, from different readers and backers. There is a third reason for the delay. It has to do with a kind of dysfunctional synchronisation in the development process. Robert is fired-up and enthusiastic, so are the design people and the actors – but they are relatively new to the project. I am not. I've been working on this for over a year and my dearest wish is to sign off as soon as possible. I am aware of energy levels slipping.

Nevertheless, I manage to finish the rewrite this morning. Phil sends a bike to take it to CSL. I hope never to see the thing again, but know I will. I've tried – partly I suppose out of boredom with reading the same thing over and over – a few innovations that weren't asked for. I wonder how they'll go down. I'm not sure about the change from New York to Los Angeles.

Robert and Chris are taking the new draft over to Dublin for a meeting with Stephen Rea and to talk to some other actors.

Saturday 23 September Chris calls. Stephen didn't like the way the new draft opened and wanted to talk to me about it. Could I go over to Dublin next week with Robert for a meeting?

Monday 25 September Robert Dornhelm calls just before leaving for New York, where he's going to work with Bonnie Timmermann on the casting. He'll send me his notes on the new draft. I'll mull them over, then meet Stephen in Dublin next week.

Tuesday 3 October Fly to Dublin with

Chris to meet Robert and Stephen. Not looking forward to this. The reaction to the new draft hasn't been particularly positive from any quarter. David Aukin says rewrites are supposed, in theory, to be improvements, but the consensus seems to be that the last draft, over which I've laboured so long, is a *disimprovement*. The innovations have not gone down well. Why change things that everyone liked in the earlier drafts, I am asked. I want to say "Out of boredom" but try instead to justify them. Sound very weak. Not feeling wonderful. In fact feeling very defensive and snappy. I say so to Chris as the taxi takes us from Dublin airport to the meeting.

Actually, it turns out quite well. Stephen is clear about his character and articulates his doubts about this draft very well. When he repeats lines from the script I suddenly see what it is an actor – a really good actor – can bring to words on the cold page. There is – if only momentarily – a change in the atmosphere in the room, as if we glimpse what the film could be. This is what is so exciting about film-making. For a while I forget all the disappointments and complications. I feel enthusiastic again. Rewrite? No problem.

Wednesday 4 October David Aukin calls to ask how things went with Stephen. Well, I say. We talk about the failed draft. He's concerned about the middle section, which he feels has lost its pace. Go back to your earlier drafts, he says, it's all in there. David, like everyone else, thinks moving the story to LA hasn't worked. Keep it in New York. With pleasure. I set to work. Robert and Chris – both of whom also want it moved back to New York – will have to work out how to film it in the dead of winter.

Monday 9 October Work solidly over the weekend on the revision of *Gesture*. I lay out the seven existing drafts and carefully go through each one, looking at the additions and amendments, marking up the things I like, crossing out the things that don't work. The original plan is to reassemble the thing as if it were London Bridge shipped across the Atlantic. It'll only take a couple of hours, I think. Of course, it doesn't turn out like that. A script is not a series of building blocks. As soon

as I start writing I get drawn into my own story. Certain things feel right, others don't. I throw away the earlier drafts and concentrate on what's before me. Work late, get up early. By morning it's finished. Phil sends a bike.

Robert calls that evening. He likes this draft much better. However, he misses a couple of things. Would I have a look at this scene, at that one? And can I do the revisions by tomorrow?

Wednesday 11 October The revised revision is complete. Phil sends a bike but not before he asks for a new synopsis. I decide I might as well do it straight away, while the thing is fresh in my mind. By now I'm convinced that we have the perfect script. Unfortunately not, even though Stephen leaves a message saying he likes it and only has a question or two about a line here and there. Robert is still not convinced. He wants me to meet Michio Yoshizaki of Nippon Film, and David.

Tuesday 17 October No matter how much you tell yourself that you're having this meeting because people like your script and want to make the film, it's hard – particularly after three or four hours – not to feel like you're under attack. I sit with Robert in the Nippon Film office going through the script line by line. Much of what's being said is sensible – that's what hurts. In a way it would be easier if it was all the philistine ramblings of the studio boss of popular imagination – then I could get up and walk out, taking my art with me. But there are good suggestions here. Starting to feel demoralised again.

Wednesday 18 October The script meeting with Robert, David, David's assistant Allon Reich and Chris goes well – David brisk and businesslike, clear about what's working and what isn't. All over in 30 minutes, which I like. David also says it's the best version of the script yet, which I also like: I was beginning to think no one else had noticed any improvement. Still there's more work to be done. But at least now there seems to be a purpose behind the extra work. Things are getting pretty tight, there remains a lot to do on all fronts, but at least we have a start-date – 4 December.

Further excerpts from Ronan Bennett's diary will be published in due course

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

Udayan Prasad talks about his film 'Brothers in Trouble' with Nick James

Udayan Prasad is one of Britain's experienced television drama and documentary directors, with a versatility and reach that has seen him tackle subjects ranging from Proust in bed in *102 Boulevard Haussmann* to the fate of India's Untouchables in Britain for *Open Space*. His new film *Brothers in Trouble*, the latest of his projects for the BBC, is loosely based on a novella in Urdu by Abdullah Hussein, adapted by the film's writer/producer Robert Buckler. It looks at the experiences of illegal Pakistani and Bengali immigrants smuggled into Britain in the mid-60s and is squarely in the BBC tradition of the conscientious recreation of a key moment in social history. Set as it is in an industrial milieu similar to Tony Richardson's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, its reference point

is the social realism of just such 60s British films, but with its subject matter it casts the gritty urban landscapes in a fresh light. There is also in the film something of that sense of an embattled community pulling together which is to be found in much British cinema of the postwar period. To see such a quintessentially British milieu as the local pub – the pub of *Coronation Street* as much as, say, of Terence Davies' *Distant Voices, Still Lives* – become the arena for these Pakistani men's emergence into the community, with a 60s beat group playing at full volume, is to realise that *Brothers in Trouble* is indeed, as its director says, a drama "about belonging".

Amir (Pavan Malhotra) arrives in the North of England determined to earn enough to



Amir at the market

For this shot we used Borough Market near London Bridge, which is really very extraordinary because it hasn't changed since the 60s. The point of the opening sequence, in which we see Amir being smuggled into the country, is that he is constantly in a state of bewilderment. He is cold and wet and he's just been hauled out of a crate. The first face he sees is that of a white working-class man telling him to hop it. He goes through the mayhem of the market looking for his contact, with the light pouring down from above.

It's quite blinding because he's been in darkness, and then when he's pushed into more darkness in the back of a van. When he arrives at the house he is again given only a glimpse of the outside before being shoved inside. We set the film in the working-class North of the mid-60s, which was a few years behind the Swinging 60s of London. It was a time when illegal immigration really took off. Before the voucher system was introduced in 1962, a year's residency and a willingness to work were sufficient to get you a permit to stay. Afterwards, most people had to resort to the illegal routes.



Amir and Sakib

This scene comes immediately after Amir has been taken on a shopping trip to a supermarket by Sakib, the sensitive and neurotic young errand-boy of the house. Sakib is an innocent, yet he is the only link with

the outside, being the only literate letter writer. Unlike the others who have come to England with the intention of staying just for a couple of years, he really wants to live in London permanently and become a writer. Amir, wanting to pay his way, has made the *faux pas* of offering dollars in the shop. Sakib is horrified, because people's

attention would immediately be attracted to them; he fails to realise that his own behaviour as he shops has been attracting attention, because of his paranoia and nervousness. The rule among the household is never to make eye contact with anyone outside the house. There is a very clear behaviour pattern when

outside the house: rushing along, hugging the walls and taking the shortest route across the street. When Sakib admonishes Amir for producing the dollars, Amir is embarrassed at being told off by this kid and at his own stupidity. This is when they become friends. This is the first time that we see Amir smile.



Mary brings light to the household

What I was very keen to do throughout the early part of the film was to keep the idea of everything happening in the dark. At night the only lights in the house are matches or candles or Sakib's electric torch. The first signs of Mary's presence are the sound of her voice and a light under

Shah's door. Curiosity and consternation bring the whole household out onto the staircase in the dark, straining for some understanding of what is going on. After living there for a short while, through her warmth and friendliness, Mary brings out something within the men which is completely unexpected, something that transcends their fear of discovery, and once that happens they don't know how to control her any longer. The thing about this

particular scene is that I wanted to show how the relationship of the whole house has been changed by her arrival. When she puts in the lightbulb at the top of the stairs, an area where before there was only darkness, there are cheers from everyone – and she shows her trust in everyone by falling backwards knowing that they will catch her. After this scene the whole lighting scheme of the film becomes warmer and brighter.

return to Pakistan and live a comfortable life. He joins a dark and furtive household full of Asian men, run for an agent by the patriarchal Hussein Shah (Om Puri). Allotted a job clearing rubbish at a textile mill, Amir is soon on good terms with all the men in the household, in particular Sakib (Pravesh Kumar), who dreams of being a writer in London. They all go to the cinema (to see Bollywood movies from home), and share the services of a visiting prostitute.

One day the household realises Hussein Shah has a white woman in his room, and will miss work. The woman, Mary (Angeline Ball), gradually makes friends with each member of the household, brightening up the place with light-bulbs. Sakib is particularly infatuated with her, while the others feel that they must refrain

from using the prostitute out of respect for her. It becomes clear that Mary is pregnant, and not by Shah. She gives birth at the house, and the men are delighted at first, giving the baby a traditional blessing and showering it with hard-earned cash. But Shah decides to use Mary's predicament to help bring his nephew Irshad (Ahsen Bhatti) into Britain legally, with a marriage of convenience. He shames the others into agreeing and Mary is obliged to comply.

Legal and safe, a trained electrician, and lacking the collective proprieties and fears the others suffer from, Irshad spends nights at the pub getting drunk. He also makes blatant advances to Mary, who responds, partly to get back at Shah. Mary invites Irshad, Sakib and Amir to the pub, scolding them when they

behave badly. Back at the house, Shah catches Irshad kissing Mary and attacks him. Irshad pulls a knife and stabs him. Everyone flees into the night with whatever they can carry, except Sakib, who has lost his mind and is transfixed by the murder. Amir cannot bring himself to leave him and calls the police.

Some years later, Amir, now a successful businessman, runs into Mary. She has a bruised eye, and confesses that her days in the house were the happiest of her life. Amir then visits Sakib in a psychiatric institution: he is about to be deported. Messing about on a bicycle, and recalling their earlier life in rural Pakistan, Amir momentarily revitalises Sakib, but the matron appears to scold them. Amir tells her to "mind her own bloody bastard business".



Conflict in the house

I told the actors that economics dictates all their characters do. They are here to earn money, to save as much and to spend as little as possible. Shah is a domineering character. He has an arrangement with the smuggler/agent so that he has the biggest room, and furniture, and gets a cut for keeping things running smoothly. This scene is some time after the birth of the child. Shah is now confronted by the whole house. This is the first time anyone has dared question his authority. When told that Shah wants Mary to marry his nephew

Irshad, so he can come to Britain legally, they're outraged and confront Shah en masse. My note to Om Puri (who plays Shah) was to say, look, they've formed into a bloc. You've got to smash them and make sure they can never reassemble. So like a politician, he uses the reality of their lives and their obligations to break them, because these people are really from a feudal social order. Part of that is that you have obligations to your extended family. Shah makes them feel that his own position in the house has been slighted by the birth, and the marriage is what he demands in return. Mary marries the nephew because she has nowhere to go.



Mary's new rules

In this scene Mary is telling Sakib and Amir the story of when she first saw Shah, how the first thing she noticed was his hands and how they suggested to her that he was a big, protective tree. She is thinking how far things have

come since then. Everybody is in darkness again: the house is reverting to the state it was in at the beginning, colder and harsher than at any time since the lightbulb was first installed. Mary now feels that the men in the household changed the rules of the game and she has decided to make up her own.

She is therefore less careful in her affections. She invites them all to the pub together and when they argue she tells them if they can't all behave they'll have to come with her one by one. Her feelings for Amir are still ambiguous. When he confronts her just before they go to the pub, there is a moment when something

might happen, but it is interrupted. I had her wear the blue blouse Irshad bought for her to look ravishing: it was designed to contrast completely with the emotional reality of the moment, which is that she feels anything but great. She looks great but she's completely an outsider here: all the others are in darkness.

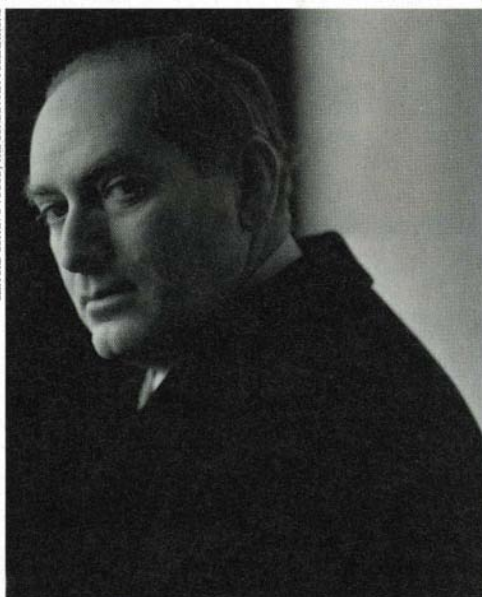


The hospital grounds

This scene was an absolutely wonderful piece of writing by Rob Buckler, and what I wanted to do was capture the spirit of the moment. Here we have a situation in which Amir is now legal – and the irony of it is that he, who had come intending to go back, was staying as a legal, while Sakib, who wanted to stay, was going back to Pakistan an emotional and mental

wreck. But here we see that there still might be a bit of life left in him and it's brought out by Amir. Throughout the film, you see bicycles everywhere: when Amir's going to work there are people cycling in; when he's walking down back alleys there are parked bicycles all over the place and he never notices them. In this scene, Amir comes to the hospital to visit Sakib. Now that he's a free man, Amir sees a bicycle for the first time. He picks it up and

rides it around Sakib, remembering things from back home, which releases him and helps him to see England for the first time. This shot in particular catches it well, with Amir coming down the slope just before he crashes the bike and comes off it. All of the energy is in front and Amir is the person who's driving it on, while Sakib is the little kid again. It's the first time, we suspect, that Sakib has laughed in a long time.



Kevin Gough-Yates on a filmmaker too often obscured by Michael Powell's fame

PRESSBURGER ENGLAND AND EXILE

Reflective: Emeric Pressburger, above; Moira Shearer in 'The Red Shoes', right

● When, in November 1970, I first met Emeric Pressburger at Michael Powell's offices in Albemarle Street, I made certain to arrive on time. At the back of my mind was playwright Rodney Ackland's acerbic description of Pressburger's inscrutable "flat Hungarian face", that would make "the visages of Dr Fu-manchu, Charlie Chan and the beloved po-face of Alan Ladd look, by comparison, like mirrors of tempestuous emotion." Ackland had worked with Pressburger on *49th Parallel* in 1941, but learnt little about him, for when Ackland turned up for a conference half an hour late, as was his custom, Pressburger would have disappeared, only sometimes leaving a note. (Ackland also co-wrote – with Wolfgang Wilhelm – the screenplay of 1939's *The Silent Battle*, from a Pressburger scenario, and worked again with him on *Wanted for Murder* in 1946.) Neither Powell nor Pressburger ever so much as mentioned Ackland in reference to *The 49th Parallel*. Indeed, on Ackland's own account, when Powell rose to make a speech at the celebration luncheon for the film at Claridges, he "thanked everybody, from stars to clapper boy... except Miss [Elisabeth] Bergner (who had left it in the middle and fled to the United States) and me."

In Pressburger I was immediately struck by a feeling of intimacy completely absent in Powell. If Powell was something of a borescout, clipping his account of events, signalling but rarely detailing essential information and never questioning his own judgment, Pressburger had a reflective presence, as if he was considering an issue for the first time. The films that he made with Powell are like diaries. "Nothing in the world," he said to me in 1971, "was as important as for me to transfer to Michael how I feel about an idea, who on the floor made it into what it was finally." Their working partnership had ended in 1956 with *Ill Met by Moonlight* and he was discussing the past, but he spoke of his feelings in the present tense. Powell could isolate his emotions, cutting off or ignoring uncomfortable elements in his life; for Pressburger the past always existed in the moment of memory. He talked of Deborah Kerr's multiple role in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*: "I think that I myself used to be like that, and I think that many people have a certain type that they are always chasing through their lives, trying to find their lives again and again and again." Sometimes he was aware of the autobiographical component; sometimes it crept in "involuntarily". "Everybody," he said, "has something in his own make-up which recurs without him being conscious of it."

I invited him to appear on stage with Powell at the culmination of a retrospective which I was organising at the National Film Theatre. There had been considerable resistance to this season. Powell was still unpopular (he was thought arrogant, although I never found him so). No one, it was feared, would come to watch their sentimental drivel, and critical interest was elsewhere (with Budd Boetticher, Don Siegel, Howard Hawks and Jean-Luc Godard). I felt that it was something of an achievement to have mounted it at all.

Would Pressburger come? Yes, he would, but in the end two things intervened, and he didn't

show. I had wanted to call this first retrospective of their work *Written, Produced and Directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger*. But as I was programming some of his earlier 'quota' films, Powell said (and I can hear his voice now), "Oh, you can't call it that as you're including films which weren't made with Emeric." He immediately suggested an alternative: *Michael Powell in Collaboration with Emeric Pressburger* (in *A Life in Movies*, when he fires off alternative suggestions for titles, seemingly on a reflex, it rings an immediate bell with me).

Pressburger, I learnt a little later, didn't take well to this shift in emphasis. The films were, after all, "Written, Produced and Directed" by them both. Then, at my request but not with my phrasing, the National Film Theatre wrote him a patronising letter: "We understand that you would like to appear on the stage with Michael Powell...". When I received a copy I sensed doom and spoke to Pressburger on the telephone. He kept reading and emphasising this phrase to me; he was used to the way this country treated its writers and would now not appear. I pleaded for him to reconsider, but his mind was made up.

It was characteristic of Emeric, as I was to discover later, to be intransigent and obdurate. He wouldn't or couldn't explain his unequivocal certitude, and I came to believe that he saw the minutiae of living as an expression of moral integrity. Hence his toying with the offending phrase from the National Film Theatre's letter, and his distress that, as one of only a handful of significant British screenwriters, he should be treated so shabbily.

Pressburger was more than the scenarist whose work Powell rewrote, a fact plain from even a casual look at films either side of their working relationship. His films are distinct, playing with fantasy and personal relationships, rhapsodic and nostalgic. In his partnership with Powell, he created most of their stories, was responsible for most of the producing, collaborated (but never on the floor) in the directing, and worked patiently in the editing room. He was born in Hungary in 1902, the son of a land manager, Jewish, musical, literary and ambitious. He went into manufacturing radio-sets but was soon out of business and left for Berlin, where (after a struggle writing short stories for newspapers) he landed on his feet as a screenwriter at UFA, Germany's most prestigious film production company. When Hitler came to power in 1933 Pressburger left for Paris and two years later arrived in England. His career was one of many permanently scarred by the savage impact of Nazism and involuntary exile. Languages which he once spoke fluently deteriorated through disuse, and whilst he could finesse in English he spoke it atypically. For the rest of his life he was haunted by a sense of loss, for an unrequited love of his youth, Magda Róna, and for the memory of a dearly loved mother who disappeared into Auschwitz. Whilst lighting-cameramen and designers (Günther Krampf, Curt Courant, Oskar Wern-dorff, Ernő Metzner) were able to adapt to exile with little language conversion, the careers of actors and writers were frequently ruined (Fritz Kortner, Albert Bassermann, Walter Schlee, ►



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◀ Herbert Victor). Pressburger was one of only two exile script-writers who shaped significant careers in Britain (the other was his friend Wolfgang Wilhelm). He is unique in that the sense of emptiness and dejection that he experienced as an exile was incorporated into his films. By asserting the essentiality of the perceiver he located himself within the tradition of Romantic thought; his work increasingly emphasised the relation of man to nature and the interior to the transcendent imagination. The Romantic qualities of the films they worked on together – as *The Archers* – are usually attributed to Powell, but they are to be found in all of Pressburger's writing, and with greater emphasis. His partnership with Powell, free from the constraints of external producers, provided the space for Romanticism to flower. Powell, with his attachment to the Greek myths and their outright Paganism, extended it beyond despair and into fantasy and the hallucinatory.

When Conrad Veidt as the Spy in Black arrives at the schoolteacher's doorway, he exchanges a few pleasantries in German with his contact (Valerie Hobson). "From now on please speak in English," she instructs him, quickly correcting his mispronunciation of "butter". "These English are a long time feeling the pinch," he says as he attacks the ham with the carving knife. Veidt and Hobson are Hardt, a German submarine captain, and his contact the teacher (and double agent) respectively; spy and counterspy in *The Spy in Black*, the first film Pressburger wrote for Powell to direct. Here are language, food and romance – all central concerns in Pressburger's life. Though when he discussed it in 1970, 30 years on, he didn't recall it as having a distinct personal quality: "I did not have very much to do with choosing the subject. But of course I was young and bursting with all sorts of ideas... so there might be something in it. But not intentionally, of course."

As we look back on it now, aware that Pressburger was less a writer who bubbled with ideas than one who constantly adapted and reworked his personal experience, the autobiographical component is clear. It was always present – except when he was hacking, writing such scripts as the unmade *Double Crime on the Maginot Line* for producer Marcel Hellman, *The Silent Battle* (Herbert Mason, 1939) for producer Curt Alexander or *Spy for a Day* (Mario Zampi, 1939) for producer Ludovico Toeplitz. Veidt's Captain Hardt – the outsider, the foreigner struggling with English – is the first in a line of characters invented by Pressburger confronted with a new language and culture. Others are Theodore Kretschmar-Schuldorff (Anton Walbrook) in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, a less obvious Alison Smith (Sheila Sim) and Sergeant Bob Johnson (John Sweet) in *A Canterbury Tale*, and Joan Webster (Wendy Hiller) in *I Know Where I'm Going!*, all of whom apprehensively experience a new world. Between 1939 and 1945, Pressburger's characters increasingly adopt English characteristics. Kretschmar-Schuldorff enters the country as an exile from Nazi Germany just before the outbreak of war. Alison Smith, a Londoner, is conscripted and despatched to work on a farm near Canterbury where the local dialect leaves her mystified. "I'm English and I



"From now on please speak in English!"

Spy and counterspy:
Conrad Veidt and Valerie
Hobson in *'The Spy in Black'*

don't speak their language," she sighs to the American army sergeant. (The difference between them is that the American was brought up, as Pressburger was, on a farm – the living proof that culture, which is international, should be distinguished from nationality.) In *"I Know Where I'm Going!"*, Joan Webster, off to marry her rich prince on an island off Scotland, listens in wonderment as villagers talk in Gaelic. When World War Two ended and Pressburger took British citizenship, the cycle came to an end.

It is amazing how quickly refugee ex-UFA writers such as Wilhelm, Curt Siodmak (Robert's brother) and Pressburger, none of whom spoke English when they arrived in Britain, established themselves. Siodmak sat in the cinema watching the same film all day to learn useful phrases and idioms. Michael Balcon, he claims, told him that he was needed at Gaumont-British to teach "our boys" how to write scripts. Wilhelm was promptly employed on knockabout comedies, polishing up the dialogue. Pressburger methodically taught himself English with a course book and a dictionary, searching for an intimate relationship with the language, trying to avoid cliché and the simple phrases of tourism, teaching himself puns and inversions. Siodmak was quickly off to Hollywood whilst Wilhelm established himself working variously with Balcon, Korda, Leslie Howard and Lauder and Gilliat.

The outsider

Pressburger worked closely with Günther Stapenhorst, his producer from UFA, and then for Korda, before finally meeting up with Powell. Powell knew from having to direct so many British scripts how inadequate they could be, and recognised immediately that he had at last found a soulmate. Whilst writing this I remembered that James Park wrote gloomily, in *Sight and Sound* in Summer 1990, of the condition of contemporary British scriptwriting, and called for a creative collaboration between writers, producers and directors. He could have been describing a congenital defect in British filmmaking: in June 1937, C. A. Lejeune was despairing of films costing £120,000 going on the floor half-written. The intense training in all fields of production that UFA gave Wilhelm and Pres-

burger provided them with the skills to create what Park describes as the "internal connections and the tight coherence of a finished script", an endowment that has rarely existed in Britain.

It is precisely this quality that Powell identified – "a marvellous continuity" – at his first meeting with Pressburger. Pressburger's own concerns lie just below the surface of so many of his films, even those seemingly dominated by Powell's visualising skills, a latent experience for the viewer: ground-bass in constant variation form, with Powell's varied harmonies erected over it. Dramatic value and underlying seriousness, rarely apparent in Powell without Pressburger, are affected by Pressburger's measured writing. Powell, although he always rewrote Pressburger's scripts to reflect his own perspective, never questioned his dramatic skills and sometimes shot sequences blindly, "but they were all right most of the time", as he said to me. He "couldn't have cared less about such remarks (in *A Matter of Life and Death*) as Dickie Attenborough's 'It's heaven isn't it?' and Kathleen Byron's 'For many people on earth it would be heaven to be a clerk.'" For him, they meant nothing in a film. Discussions of their films nearly always emphasise the visual (Powell's sometimes intense imagery and his adventurous use of cinema technology) but the concentration on relationships, the dispirited desolation that the strongest characters often feel (in short the human face of their joint films) are entirely Pressburger's. This scene from *A Matter of Life and Death*, almost irrelevant to Powell, reveals Pressburger still uncovering layers in the English language, discovering the varying ways in which the same word can be used, finding inflections and changes in pitch that effect meaning. It was a habit he did not abandon. During the late 50s he took to linguistic philosophy and the study of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Pressburger's films are examples of an untapped area of study within British cinema: the film of exile, and perhaps also in his case the film of adaptation.

What struck one, talking to Powell, was how he saw the cinema as "a wonderful toy". In *A Matter of Life and Death*, Pressburger "would have written the scene with [Roger] Livesey... standing at the window looking down at a village ►

◀ street... 'This is my street' and so on! I would seize on this, introduce the *camera obscura* idea as a wonderful trick to get everyone interested and excited..." Pressburger described the films quite differently; they sprung from his own experience. He was telling a story, certainly, but one shaped by his own moral sensibility. "*I Know Where I'm Going!*" is "about this girl who was brought up to become a superior sort of being. Her standards were entirely different from the standards I was aiming at or people I liked were aiming at. As against her, there was a young man who was in a way a happy-go-lucky sort of man who was doing what everyone was trying to do well during the war." It is not impossible to recognise Pressburger in this Roger Livesey character.

In his novel *The Glass Pearls*, about a concentration camp doctor, Otto Reitmüller, hiding in London under a pseudonym and haunted by the idea of being hunted down, the boarding house in which Reitmüller lives recalls the one in Pressburger's first feature film for UFA: Robert Siodmak's *Abschied* (1930), with its lodgers meeting and gossiping in the hall. Reitmüller, a violinist like Pressburger himself, has escaped from Germany to Paris and is now trying to camouflage his past, earning his living as a piano tuner. The novel conveys Pressburger's horror at the paradox that otherwise cultured people – people who like himself "adored *Rosenkavalier*", educated figures who had taken the Hippocratic oath – could behave monstrously and participate in horrific crimes. "I always believed, and I have to say that there are also good Germans, one or two, though the great majority of them proved to be pretty awful, pretty horrible," he said. In the mid-60s he researched in the Wiener Library, and also met the fascist writer Bill Hopkins, the author of the reviled *The Divine and the Decay* (1957). Hopkins later told Kevin Macdonald, Pressburger's grandson, that in Pressburger's eyes "to be Jewish was a pejorative term... cheap, vulgar, detestable..." but I never caught a hint of this and don't believe it. It tells us something about Hopkins but nothing about Pressburger, who was more likely researching fascism, wanting to meet the enemy face-to-face. Their differences in attitude towards life were displayed in their attitude towards food. Hopkins saw it as "just faeces" that "would emerge from my bowels before long as shit". Pressburger, a gourmet, saw food as a celebration and expression of existence; the differences between them were those between life and death.

Questionable taste

The Archers, the most fascinating partnership in British cinema, was nonetheless an uncomfortable one for it. *Contraband*, *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*, "*I Know Where I'm Going!*" and *The Small Back Room*, their black-and-white films of British integrity, received an immediate if grudging acceptance. But *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *A Matter of Life and Death*, *Black Narcissus*, *The Red Shoes* and *The Tales of Hoffmann* – all colour films of sometimes startling brilliance and originality – were discounted as the product of filmmakers of aberrant taste, outside the national concerns of such films as Victor Saville's *Hindle*

Wakes (1931), Basil Dean's *Sing as We Go!* (1934), Charles Frend's *The Foreman Went to France* (1942), Launder and Gilliat's *Millions Like Us* (1943) and some of the post-war films from Ealing. When Richard Winnington reviewed *A Matter of Life and Death* in November 1946, he considered that it was "even further away from the essential realism and the true business of the British movie than their two previous films," and felt that Powell and Pressburger "seem to have reached their haven at last – in the other world, which is just like all the Other Worlds film producers have cooked up for us – an illimitable Wembley Stadium surrounded by tinkling music and mists, from which all men of taste... would quickly blaspheme their way out." Such views, by no means uncommon at the time, look quaint today, when these films have established themselves at the very centre of British cinema history.

Pressburger's ideological position allowed Powell the space to play. It was only when the stories were not original or were tied down with *fact* that Powell found them difficult, sometimes impossible, to work on. It is strikingly difficult, outside of those specifically located in World War Two, to date any of the action within them. Pressburger's films are consciously defocused, impossible to pin down. In the *Blimp* script, the evening when General Clive Wynne-Candy (Roger Livesey) is banned from talking on the BBC is specifically dated: it is the day that Pétain came to power. But this key articulation is absent from the film: quite deliberately the work was not pinned to a specific time and place. *The Red Shoes* could take place at any time after the invention of radio; *A Matter of Life and Death*, although it opens on "the night of the 2nd May, 1945", does not use the war even as a backdrop. This "wonderful conjuring trick", as Powell described it, derives in part from a novel (from which much else is taken, also): *A Journey Round My Skull*, by Frigyes Karinthy. This well known Hungarian novelist and poet describes the onset and development of a series of hallucinations caused by a brain tumour requiring major surgery – these events, although a subjective experience, are underpinned by political events: "The big headline of the evening paper was now set up. It ran *Italians enter Addis Ababar*" and "*Budapest. Monday, May 4th...* There were rumours that Léon Blum was going to form a Government..."

Why does Pressburger not use this device when he takes so much else from the novel? In the script for the film, the long opening trajectory through space contains a revealing statement: "There is music wherever there is harmony, order or proportion; and thus we may maintain the Music of the Spheres... Great suns and moons and stars roll in their orbit... huge molten masses tremble and flare with spectral, incandescent vapours, comets and shooting-stars hurtle by. Yet there seems a pattern, 'a well-ordered motion full of harmony' and behind it all a theory and a purpose..."

This is more than a Platonic perception of the universe: it reveals that Pressburger, at a point in his life when he was coming to terms with his personal losses from the war, maintained a deeply religious appreciation of exis-

tence that transcended immediate political events. Earlier in 1946, the year of *A Matter of Life and Death*, he had bought a copy of Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, itself partially written in response to the war. The chapter on Plato's Theory of Ideas opens with a quotation which argues that the human race will never have rest from social and political evil until political greatness and wisdom meet in one. Only then will "our State have a possibility of life and hold the light of day."

Powell-Pressburger films were often resisted on grounds of "questionable taste", but it may also be because their themes, summed up by Raymond Durnat as "embracing soft-centred systems of mystical belief", appeared to spit in the face of political necessity whilst in fact revealing "a serious belief in... wayward natural forces". They were concerned less with the practical requirements of winning the war and of social reconstruction and more, as Pressburger put it, with "looking beyond it", with emphasising universality and a vision of truth that would bring nations together. Russell draws an analogy in *History of Western Philosophy* that reminds one of the Powell-Pressburger approach to film-making, of first walking all over a mountain in a mist, until every path, ridge and valley is separately familiar, and then from a distance seeing the mountain whole and clear in bright sunshine.

We can see from Powell's early films, *The Fire Raisers* (1933), *Red Ensign* (1934), and *The Edge of the World* (1937) in particular, that nature asserts an amoral power over life: life emerges from the elements and returns to them. A literary parallel can be identified in the earlier work of Pressburger. In 1935, while Powell was still struggling to develop a style, emulating Hitchcock in passages of *Her Last Affaire*, Pressburger was already writing mature if less than original films. Written in exile in Paris and produced the same year, *Monsieur Sans-Gêne* (Karl Anton), is a case in point – as is its American remake, *One Rainy Afternoon* (Roland V. Lee, 1936). The story, had it not been turned into a film, might have graced the pages of *Woman's Journal* or *True Romances* (Graham Greene, writing in the *Spectator* in July 1936, strongly disliked it). The personal and sentimental aspect of his work, is already present.

At a Parisian cinema, the matinée audience for *L'Amour Secret* watch their own dreams of love on the cinema screen. Not wanting to be spotted, a lover and his mistress, a young actor and the wife of a senior politician, regularly sneak into a cinema after the lights go down and creep out before the end of the film. He complains that he joins the film only after the girl has been snatched from the arms of her lover and leaves before they are reunited, seeing nothing but unhappiness. For Lubitsch, who with René Clair was a strong influence on Pressburger, the theme of *coitus interruptus* would have run through the film; for Pressburger, the preoccupation is rather true love, of the immediate spiritual variety (as in the Powell-Pressburger films). The actor (Fernand Gravey in the French version, Francis Lederer in the American) sits in the wrong seat and makes advances to another woman (Josseline Gaël; Ida Lupino).

As in *"I Know Where I'm Going!"* and *A Matter of Life and Death*, the right woman has been found by a chance meeting. Charged and convicted for being a public nuisance, the actor is photographed, a number 6663636 hanging on his chest. (Aware of the way in which Pressburger introduced elements of his life into his film scripts one might speculate about the meaning of the number itself.)

Although written at a time of intense political upheaval in France, *Monsieur Sans-Gêne* avoids politics in favour of fantasy (even if 6663636 turns out to be a telephone number, or that of Pressburger's identity card). 1935 was the year in which the Paris Writers Congress took place, attended by Bertolt Brecht, Heinrich Mann, Ernst Toller and E. M. Forster. There was fear of a rightwing coup in France, the Popular Front was emerging and Jean Renoir completed the politically conscious *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*. But social or political conflict is as absent from *Monsieur Sans-Gêne* as it is from the films Pressburger made with Powell at the height of the war. Pressburger's individual moral position isolated him from politics and Powell's swank protected them both, up to a point, from the realities surrounding them.

It is no surprise that their apparent lack of commitment provoked antipathy in those who attached themselves to a more collaborative programme. Where others, such as Carol Reed with *The Way Ahead* (1944) and Sidney Gilliat with *Waterloo Road* (1944), were making films of immediate relevance to the war, Pressburger and Powell had adopted a Platonic position.

Pressburger's one attempt at directing, *Twice Upon a Time* (1953), showed how greatly he depended on Powell's sprightly visual cockiness. On the other hand, Powell's films without Pressburger lack ambiguity and are directed with little sensitivity towards the actors. The visualisation was always predominantly Powell's, at least in combination with their designers and photographers, but everything was discussed between the two, and it is at this point that their two imaginations met. Who knows how Powell's or Pressburger's careers would have developed had Pressburger left for Hollywood in 1938 (as the entertainment journalist Pem expected)? As it was, Pressburger started working for Korda on a story that eventually became *The Red Shoes* and Korda, shortly after, introduced them to one another.

Pressburger sometimes saw his pension in the continual optioning of stories that went unmade. If they were turned down, as was his third novel, he relegated them not to the wastebin but to the drawer of his desk, where like wine, he would wait for them to mature. Sometimes he misjudged it and the ideas went flat, as with *Miracle in St. Anthony's Lane*, which he had written in Paris in 1934.

A few years earlier he had slept rough in a famous Berlin synagogue, planning to creep out just before morning service. Too late, he heard the congregation chanting, and crept down, only to be welcomed as a member of the quorum; the service had not started, and the sounds he had heard had been in his imagination. "Surely," he claimed, "a miracle." A René Clair-like idea, full of character, with a number



Important events occur inside characters' heads

Paradise lost: David Niven and Marius Goring in Powell and Pressburger's *'A Matter of Life and Death'*

of interlocking stories, *Miracle in St. Anthony's Lane* was another story of exile, only a step away from this anecdote. It reached the screen only in 1957, directed by Julian Amyes, converted into *Miracle in Soho*. Originally a story of the German exiles in Paris, it had now become one about Italian immigrants in London. In England Pressburger's original story had been widely admired, but no one wanted to make it and Powell thought it lacked "substance" (a curious observation from the man who chose to direct *Honeymoon*). A postman is at the centre of the web of stories, linking the locals – but the miracle, if there is one, takes place in the church, when Julia (Belinda Lee) prays for her lover, the Lothario of London's roadworkers, to return. The water-main explodes and brings him back.

Powell recognised it as too close to *A Matter of Life and Death* and didn't want to tread old ground, but he might, just as readily, have thought it too similar to *"I Know Where I'm Going!"* or to *Blimp*. If *A Matter of Life and Death* was for Powell "the most perfect film", he is talking about technical perfection; for Pressburger his finest script, although not his most personal one, is *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, into which is introduced another component from *Miracle in St. Anthony's Lane*. The 'miracle', the hopeless dream of a girl in love, is close to the shifts that Pressburger was making in his narratives during the 1930s and 40s: the question is less whether the 'miracle' is actually a miracle, conjured up by a prayer in the church, but more whether it exists in the imagination of a

lovesick girl. Is it another case of the Indian Rope Trick, as with the Roger Livesey syndrome of *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*? An event that only occurs for those who want to see or dream it in the first place? By the time that *Miracle in Soho* was made, in 1957, the central creative ideas had been plundered by the Archers and only the bones remained.

Music in the head

In all the most successful of Pressburger's writing, his novels included, important and significant events occur inside the heads of the characters. Their limits are those of the imagination. He believed in music's power to translate human experience and translate human ideals; his favourite work towards the end of his life being Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. Powell and Pressburger came close to making a Strauss film that would have taken place entirely within the composer's imagination. Pressburger's films, from *Abschied* in 1930 to *Miracle in Soho* in 1957, reveal more consistent themes and concerns than their Powell equivalents. Their joint praxis discloses a compatible philosophical view of the world which is essentially anti-Rationalist, expressed not only pictorially but textually, through Pressburger's belief in the primacy of the perceiver and the role of tradition in constructing a morally integrated world.

'The Small Back Room' is released on video this month. Kevin Macdonald's *'Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death of a Screenwriter'* is published by Faber at £20

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Red bell-bottoms in China

I didn't grow up with any real film culture, only propaganda films like *Lenin in October* – which I show in *The Monkey Kid* (a scene where the children gather to watch the Russian film) – and *Lenin in 1917*, or Albanian and Romanian-made propaganda films. Actually some of them had their moments. As a young child I really had nothing to compare them with, and at the time they made quite an impression. I was just like a sponge soaking up whatever cinematic images I could get access to. I remember one Albanian film called *The Footsteps*, that had one real kissing scene in it. It was really amazing to see actual body contact in a film like that. At that time in China, there was a lot of Maoist opera and cinema being produced. It was all basically propaganda, with a little artistic technique thrown in for embellishment.

In the two years between the end of the Cultural Revolution, in 1976, and the opening of the Beijing Film Academy in 1978, the whole country was suddenly opened up to foreign films. My father used to work for the Social Science Institute, and had special privileges in terms of access to foreign cinema. During those two years I went to the cinema almost every day. It wasn't always easy – you had to have special connections to get tickets, and sometimes we had to sneak around a bit to get into the theatres. But that didn't stop me.

Other cultures, other countries

Seeing so many foreign films really opened my eyes to the reality of other cultures, other countries. I thought "Wow, life is so different outside of China." I realised that cinema had real power – it could change the way you think, it could even change your life. My dream was simply to continue seeing films. That's why I went to film school; I wanted to see as many films as possible.

Before 1976, film school had been like a kind of factory. There was a programme called "Workers, Peasants and Soldiers", where people were pulled from all walks of life and given basic training in film production. It didn't matter if you had talent or not. Once you were recommended by the head of your Working Unit, you would be sent to this programme, to become either a film-maker or an actor. But in 1978, when the Academy re-opened, there was actually a formal entrance exam. Out of 3000 students who applied, only 156 were chosen. It was quite prestigious to gain admission.

I went to the Beijing Film Academy from 1978 to 1982. It was a truly liberating experience for me. Before, everything had always been dictated to me – like the children in *The Monkey Kid*, the only things we learned in school were based around Mao's quotations. We weren't encouraged to think for ourselves. At film school, instead of subjecting us to long lectures about film, the first thing that our professors did was to show us films like *Breathless*, *The Red Desert*, *Blowup*, old-style Hollywood films like *Gone With The Wind* – lots of different films, so that we could build a sense of cinema visually, rather than "learning by rote". I was in heaven! I felt like I was using my senses and my intellect for

Xiao-Yen Wang, director of 'The Monkey Kid' recalls the shock of such foreign films as 'The 400 Blows'

the very first time.

My father thought that film school was a bad, corrupting influence on me. He thought that my mind was being polluted by foreign cinema and Western ideas. Even though the Cultural Revolution was over, there was still a lot of resistance to new ideas. One day, in my first year of film school, I came home in a pair of red bell-bottom trousers, quite tight-fitting, which I thought were the height of fashion – even though they were about ten years out of date (at the time it was hard to get anything that wasn't). All the neighbours stared – quite scandalised at the tight fit, very different to the standard, baggy Maoist trousers. My father was really angry about this. Of course he blamed the film school. But my mother was very encouraging. In fact she bought me the trousers. I guess that wearing them was a way of expressing myself – of standing out from thousands of people who all dressed the same.

My favourite course was "French New Wave Cinema". The one film that really impressed me was Truffaut's *The 400 Blows*. I was used to films having a beginning, a middle, a climax and an end. But the way Truffaut showed little details in the boys' lives – sitting in class, stretching in PE class – or the way the camera followed them one by one as they all disappeared around the corner, these made me realise that there were other possibilities besides that kind of film narrative. I remember the freeze-frame technique at the end – that goes in closer and closer to the image. That really made an impression on me. The boy had such a blank look on his face, almost no expression, his eyes staring into space. He seemed to me like such a victim of circumstance; it was his environment that caused him to do all those terrible things. He didn't want to be at the reform school – he was controlled by his parents, and by the society.

Perhaps I was relating to this character – a kid alone in the world – because of my own

childhood experience. [As intellectuals, Xiao-Yen's parents had been sent away during the Cultural Revolution, leaving her sister and her to fend for themselves.] I identified somehow with his situation. I remember the scenes where he tries to go out on his own, when he sleeps in the printing shop, and then breaks off a piece of ice to wash his face, and later when he steals the milk because he's hungry.

Sense of risk

Or the scene when he tries to sell the typewriter. I loved the way Truffaut showed the boy sneaking into the building. When he looks down from the window, I remember the angle from which he was shot. The camera was shooting upwards towards his face. There is such a sense of risk in his undertaking – and then when he can't get enough money for the typewriter, and he decides to bring it back and gets caught – the drama of all that really impressed me. Also the scene where he sees his mother kiss her lover on the street – that was powerful. Or at the beginning of the film, where the boy is doing his homework, trying to be "good", but the mother is kind of pushing him away. That showed me how you could depict family life using just a few powerful details. There was no fancy camera technique or sudden movements – the scene was created from simple elements.

I had been used to big epic revolutionary cinema. *The 400 Blows* showed me the power of moving from the personal to the universal, made me realise that showing small details in individual lives could create cinema more powerful than those big propaganda films – and that cinema could be natural and real rather than false and manipulative. I think the beauty of cinema is its ability to transform everyday reality from individual lives into something larger on the screen, something universal that viewers can relate to their own lives. Even though my film *The Monkey Kid* was about a girl growing up in the Cultural Revolution, many people from the West, from other countries, have told me that they identified with the girl – and that many things in the film reminded them of their own childhood. When I hear that, I feel satisfied that I have achieved a certain goal as a film-maker.

When I used to watch the old revolutionary films, the characters were way beyond me – I couldn't relate to them. Even though when I watched those films I was really trying to be a good little Red Guard by imitating the characters on the screen, I didn't identify with them. When I first saw *The 400 Blows*, it took a while to "digest". Its images were powerful and have stayed with me for a long time. But at that time the distance between my own cultural reality and *The 400 Blows* was quite wide.

I literally grew up in revolutionary times. I was taught that speaking about personal feelings was a kind of egoism. Anything on a personal level was "wrong". At film school I realised that personal emotions could be used to affect others – not just big, idealistic, unreal stories.

Xiao-Yen Wang was interviewed by Hadani Dittmars



BE STILL POSTERS AND DESIGNS

Details of lives: Jean-Pierre L aud in 'The 400 Blows'

REVIEWS

Reviews,
synopses and
full credits for
all the month's
new films plus
one re-release

Angels and Insects

United Kingdom/USA 1995

Director: Philip Haas

Certificate

15

Distributor

Film Four

Distributors Ltd

Production Companies

Playhouse

International Pictures

In association with The

Samuel Goldwyn

Company

Executive Producer

Lindsay Law

Producers

Joyce Herlihy

Belinda Haas

Production Office

Co-ordinator

Lorraine Fennell

Location Manager

Colin Plenty

Post-production Supervisor

Kerry Orent

2nd Unit Director

Steve Nicholls

Assistant Directors

Simon Hinkly

Peter Heslop

Steve Robinson

Script Supervisor

Danuta Skarszewska

Casting

Celestia Fox

Associate:

Hayley Mort

Screenplay

Belinda Haas

Philip Haas

Based on the novella

Morpho Eugenia by

A. S. Byatt

Director of Photography

Bernard Zitzermann

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Kevin Flay

Editor

Belinda Haas

Production Designer

Jennifer Kerne

Art Director

Alison Riva

Set Dresser

Jill Quertier

Costume Design

Paul Brown

Wardrobe Supervisor

Jane Hamilton

Chief Make-up

Sarah Monzani

Hair stylist

Martin Samuel

Title Design

Drentell Doyle Partners

Opticals

John Alagna

The Effects House

Music

Alex Balanescu

Amazon Music:

Maro Refosco

Music Performed by

The Balanescu Quartet

Robin McGee

Amazon Music:

Maro Refosco

Balanescu Quartet Music

Producer/Recordist

Michael J. Dutton

Ballroom Music Editor

Annette Kudrak

Choreography

Kim Brandstrup

Supervising Sound Editor

Wendy Hedin

Sound Editors

Stuart Emanuel

Hal Levinsohn

Michael Shore

Sound Recordist

Colin Nicolson

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Michael Barry

Foley Artist

Brian Vancho

Loop Group

Peter Nadin

Sylvie Le Blancq

Katie Donnison

Entomologist

Chris O'Toole

Key Horsemaster

Peter Roberts

Butterfly Handler

John Calvert

Cast

Mark Rylance

William Adamson

Patsy Kensit

Eugenia Alabaster

Saskia Wickham

Rowena Alabaster

Chris Larkin

Robin Swinnerton

Douglas Henshall

Edgar Alabaster

Annette Badland

Lady Alabaster

Kristin Scott Thomas

Matty Crompton

Lindsay Thomas

Lady Alabaster's Maid

Michelle Sylvester

Margaret Alabaster

Claire Lovell

Elaine Alabaster

Jenny Lovell

Edith Alabaster

Anna Massey

Miss Mead

Ona Haas

Alice Alabaster

Angus Hodder

Guy Alabaster

Margaret Golder

Nurse

Paul Ready

Tom

Jeremy Kemp

Sir Harald Alabaster

Naomi Gudge

Martha

John Jenkins

Ralph Blackwood

John Veasey

Arthur

Clare Redman

Amy

Jack Turney

Elizabeth Turney

Newborn Twins

Nicky Turney

Wetnurse

Alice Maitland

Hannah Maitland

Six-month-old Twins

Vita Haas

Robert Edgar, age 1

Pam Smitham

Midwife

Brett Harris

Stable Lad

Talkun Abdureheim

Mark Ashman

Daniel Belton

Joy Constantinides

Jason Davies

Michael Fulwell

Suzanne Gordon

Bernadette Iglich

Ming Yam Low

Enrique Neyra

Fuschia Peters

Leesa Phillips

Claudia Pottier

Angelina Heredia Reza

Marco De Santos

Stephanie Smith

Kenneth Tharp

Andrew Titcombe

Souli Yates

Dancers

The Balanescu Quartet

Ballroom Musicians

Collette McBaid

Angela Raynor

Spinsters/Milliners

Sharryn Arnold

Kay Sarah Morgan

Serving Girls/

Parlour Maids

Mark Boffin

Paul James Parker

Manservants

Terry Askew

Gardener

Sarah Braker

Lucy Thompson

Linen Maids

Catrina Cauchi

Serving Girl

Austin France

Stable Lad

Lorna Fielding

Child Servant

Walter White

Tailor

Gareth Knapman

Tailor's Assistant

Paula Askew

Margaret Clarke

Carmen Borton

Seamstresses

Marian Roseman Hayes

Housekeeper

Judith Clulow

Richard Humphries

Margaret Hussey

Norman Hussey

Valerie Middleton

Laura Alice Needham

Brian Pickin

Richard Rawlinson

Wedding Guests

Nicola Smitham

Nursemaid

Tracey Clarke

Claire Brown

Child Servants

Alan John Bannister

Graham Glover

Walter Lincoln

Chris Treanor

Iain Wright

Palibearers

10,545 feet

117 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Mid-Victorian England. William Adamson, a young naturalist who has spent some years in the Amazon rainforest and was shipwrecked on his voyage home, is offered shelter at the country mansion of Sir Harald Alabaster, an enthusiastic amateur collector. Of working-class origins, William feels out of place among the patrician Alabasters, and is embarrassed to find himself attracted to the eldest daughter, Eugenia. Her sister Rowena tells him of Eugenia's secret sorrow: her fiancé, Captain Hunt, died recently in tragic circumstances.

Sir Harald invites William to stay on and catalogue his chaotic collection. William accepts and also agrees to help a resident poor relation, Matty Crompton, with the education of the younger children. Increasingly drawn to Eugenia, despite the hostility of her brother Edgar, William contrives to surround her with a cloud of butterflies in the conservatory as a mark of his devotion.

Rowena's engagement to a neighbouring landowner is announced. William tries to comfort the mortified Eugenia; to his amazement she accepts his proposal of marriage. Edgar tries to provoke William to a fight, but fails. On his wedding night William finds Eugenia a passionate and enthusiastic partner, but is banished from her bed once she becomes pregnant. At a loose end, he gets increasingly involved in studying ants with Matty Crompton and the children, and at Matty's urging embarks on a book, a popularising study of ant behaviour.

Eugenia gives birth to twin girls, and re-admits William to her bed. She subsequently produces a boy, then twin girls again. William's book is sent to a publisher and warmly accepted. Out hunting one day, William receives a mysterious summons back to the house, where he surprises Edgar and Eugenia in bed. Eugenia confesses that the liaison, which dates back to her childhood and motivated Captain Hunt's suicide, has continued throughout her marriage. Disgusted, William confides in Matty, who tells him she knew of the incest, and that she has booked two berths on a ship leaving for South America. Telling Eugenia he will never see her again, William leaves with Matty for Liverpool.

A.S. Byatt's *Morpho Eugenia*, one of two novellas that make up her book *Angels and Insects*, is a pendant to her Booker prize winner *Possession*. Like the much longer novel, it's a witty, accomplished pastiche of Victorian fiction, using the forms and conventions of mid-nineteenth century literature – in this case, the rise of a principled, humbly-born hero and the revelation of a guilty family secret – to throw quizzical light on the preoccupations of the age and their resonance down to the present day.

Philip Haas is evidently drawn to such ludic, off-centre texts; his last film was an adaptation of Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance*. Like Auster's novel, Byatt's story deals with notions of entrapment and social exploitation, and the way the exploited can be led to connive in their own enslavement. William Adamson is lured into the lush, smooth world of the Alabasters by the voluptuous bait of Eugenia and held there, snared in honey, to be made use of – as Sir Harald's assistant, as unpaid tutor, as foil of respectability to mask his wife's incestuous passion.

Haas has stayed faithful to Byatt's original. Very little has been left out; perhaps the only serious omission is the debates between William and the troubled Sir Harald over Darwinism versus orthodox theology. As a result, Jeremy Kemp's Harald is less than fully realised, his two emotional outbursts seeming under-motivated. But overall the casting is ideal. Patsy Kensit's milk-fed, slightly vacant prettiness has never been better used, though acting honours go to Kristin Scott Thomas as Matty, lithe and darkly watchful, her sharp fingers and glances threatening to puncture the overstuffed complacencies around her. Haas renders the novella's analogies between human and insect worlds largely in terms of camera angle and framing, often shooting from above to show us the soft white Alabasters, the queens and drones, lolling elegantly amid the busy black scurrings of their servants.

The problem with this entomologist's-eye view is that we remain emotionally detached, never engaging with the film's characters as people, and this isn't due solely to the camera technique. It seems churlish to reproach a film-maker for being too faithful to his source material when there are so many crass examples of the opposite fault, but too much fidelity can betray as surely as too little. Much of Byatt's dialogue has been transposed intact to the film, and her characters speak in rotund, composed periods. This works fine on the page, since it's how Victorians often spoke in their fiction but on screen it sounds stiff and stilted. *Angels and Insects* sets all its elements impeccably in place – Zitzermann's photography, shifting from sunlit tranquillity to Gothic brooding, and Balanescu's subtly not-quite-period score are both beautifully judged – but there's a void at its heart. A film that should be shaken by secret passions lacks passion of its own to secrete.

Philip Kemp

Assassins

USA 1995

Director: Richard Donner

Certificate

18

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Silver Pictures
In association with
Donner/Shuler-Donner
Productions

Executive Producers

Lauren Shuler-Donner
Dino de Laurentis

Producers

Richard Donner
Joel Silver
Bruce Evans
Raynold Gideon
Andrew Lazar
Jim van Wyck

Co-producers

Richard Solomon
Alexander Collett
Dan Cracchiolo
Associate Producers

J. Mills Goodloe
Ilyse A. Reutlinger
Cynthia L. Neber
Tony Munafa
Karyn Fields
Julie Durk

Production Associate

Edward Rosen

Production Supervisor

John M. Woodward

Unit Production Manager

Patricia Churchill

2nd Unit:

Bruce Shurley

Puerto Rico:

Nannette Rosa-Collazo

Location Manager

Patricia Fay

2nd Unit Location Manager

Eneida Nunez

Post-production Supervisor

Mark Marshall

2nd Unit Directors

Conrad Palmisano

Assistant Directors

Robert Sallin

Jim van Wyck

John G. Scotti

Jayson Merrill

2nd Unit:

Tom Archuleta

James Hapas

Puerto Rico:

Vicente Juarbe

Script Supervisors

Sioux Richards

2nd Unit:

Karen Thorndike

Casting

Marion Dougherty

Casting Associate

Douglas Wright

Screenplay

Andy Wachowski

Larry Wachowski

Brian Helgeland

Story

Andy Wachowski

Larry Wachowski

Director of Photography

Vilmos Zsigmond

2nd Unit:

Gary Holt

Aerial Photography

Frank Holgate

Camera Operators

Ray de La Motte

Neal Norton

2nd Unit:

Paul Pollard

Joseph Thibo

Michael Jones

Opticals

Buena Vista Imaging

Pacific Title

Computer Graphics

Rick Lupton

Chris Cobb

Editor

Richard Marks

Film:

Lawrence Jordan

Associate Editor

Lori C. Ingle

Production Designer

Tom Sanders

Supervising Art Director

Daniel T. Dorrance

Art Directors

Nathan Crowley

Steven Arnold

Puerto Rico:

Leticia Stella

Set Designers

Alan Manzer

Gilbert Wong

Chad Griffin

Noelle King

Set Decorator

Lisa Dean

Special Effects Supervisor/

Co-ordinator

Jon Belyeu

Puerto Rico:

Rafael Perez

Costume Design

Elizabeth McBride

Costume Supervisor

Cha Blevins

Make-up Supervisor

Lee Harman

2nd Unit:

Tammy Baker

Key Hairstylist

Charlene Johnson

Title Design

Greenberg/Schluter

Music

Mark Mancina

Additional Music

Don Harper

John van Tongeren

Christopher Ward

Jeff Rona

Supervising Music Editor

Zigmund Gron

Songs/Music Extracts

"Like A Rolling Stone"

by Bob Dylan, per-

formed by the Rolling

Stones; "Our Times" by

Beth Gibbons, Geoff

Barrow, Adrian Utley,

Lalo Schifrin, Henry

Brooks and Otis Turner,

performed by

Portishead; "La Muerta"

by Michael Kamen,

performed by Danielle

Wiener; "The Day Of

The Dead" by and

performed by Michael

Kamen; "Beginning To

End" by Klover and Roy

Z, performed by Klover;

"Spit" by Tommy Joy,

performed by Pusher;

"Oh Mio Babbino No

Caro" from the opera

"Gianni Schicchi",

music by Giacomo

Puccini, words by

G. Forzano, performed

by Leslie Dennis

Supervising Sound Editor

Robert G. Henderson

Sound Editors

Dave Horton Snr

Greg Dillon

Samuel C. Crutcher

Adam Johnston

Timothy A. Cleveland

Christopher S. Aud

Michael E. Lawshe

John V. Bonds

Paul J. Diller

Scott A. Tinsley

Bob O'Brien

Richard Burton

Norval D. Crutcher

ADR Supervisor

William Carruth

Dialogue Editors

Virginia Cook-

McGowan

Catherine Flynn

John F. Reynolds

Marshall Winn

ADR Editors

James Simcik

Darleen Stoker

Karyn Foster

Supervising Foley Editor

David L. Horton

Production Sound Mixer

Petur Hliddal

ADRMixer

Troy Porter

Re-recording Mixers

John Reitz

David Campbell

Gregg Rudloff

Jeffrey J. Habousch

Kevin E. Carpenter

Greg P. Russell

Les Fresholtz

Dick Alexander

Score Mixers

Alan Meyerson

Steve Kempster

Foley Artists

Kevin Bartnoff

Catherine Rowe

Foley Supervisor

Eric Gotthelf

Stunt Co-ordinators

Conrad Palmisano

Dick Hancock

Cast

Sylvester Stallone

Puerto Rath

Antonio Banderas

Miguel Bain

Julianne Moore

Electra

Anatoly Davydov

Nicolai

Muse Watson

Ketcham

Stephen Kahan

Alan Branch

Kelly Rowan

Jennifer

Reed Diamond

Bob

Kai Wulff

Remy

Kerry Skalsky

James Douglas Haskins

David Shark (Fralick)

Buyers

Stephen Liska

John Harms

Whitey Shapiro

Stefan Enriquez

Fulvio Cecere

Shirley Oliver

Ernie Hall

Calli Medved

Bob Minor

Barbara Anne Klein

Cops

Edward J. Rosen

Cemetery Caretaker

Christina Orchid

Dowager

Bruce R. Orchid

Anibal O. Lleras

Michael DeCoursey

Cabbies

James Louis Oliver

Customs Officer

Sue Carolyn Wise

Obnoxious Woman

Ron Ben Jarrett

Maintenance Man

Marian Collier

Pet Shop Lady

Dave Young

Male Guard

Ragna Sigurn

Female Guard

Mark Woodford

Room Service Waiter

Marta Labatut

ChocoOrta

Cemetery Woman

Ivonne Piazza

Bank Teller

Angel Vazquez

Bank Official

Axel Anderson

Bank President

David Dollase

Jim Graham

Bodyguard

Wally Dalton

Priest

Paul Tuerpe

John Procaccino

Nerissa E. Williams

Reporters

Juan Manuel Lebron

Puerto Rican Cafe

Waiter

Eddie Bellafiores

Fruit Vendor

Thomas Helgeland

Soloist

James W. Gavin

Police Helicopter Pilot

Scott Stuber

Parking Attendant

Richard Blum

Watcher

Eric Sather

Cab Customer

Wally Gudgeff

Upset Passenger

J. Mills Goodloe

Newlywed Man

Babe

Australia 1995

Director: Chris Noonan

Certificate

U
Distributor
UIP

Production Company
Universal Pictures
presents
A Kennedy Miller Film

Producers

George Miller
Doug Mitchell
Bill Miller

Associate Producers

Philip Hearnshaw
Daphne Paris
Catherine Barber

Production Co-ordinator

Vanessa Brown

Production Animatronics

Co-ordinator

Laurie Faen

Development Production

Manager

Brenda Pam

Unit Production Manager

Sue Wild

Unit Manager

Will Matthews

Location Manager

David Lightfoot

Post-production Supervisor

Marcus D'Arcy

Post-production Co-ordinator

Jane Maguire

Additional Unit Director

Daphne Paris

Assistant Directors

Philip Hearnshaw

Simon Warnock

Michael Bau

Additional Unit:

P. J. Voeten

Geoffrey Guiffre

Additional Unit Continuity

Janette Mareck

Script Supervisor

Kate Dennis

Casting

Liz Mullinar Casting

Valerie McCaffrey

Screenplay

George Miller

Chris Noonan

Based on the book

by Dick King-Smith

Director of Photography

Andrew Leslie

Additional Unit Director

of Photography

Ken Arlidge

Location Effects Unit

Director:

Scott E. Anderson

Camera Operator:

Steve Newman

Motion Control

Operator:

Matt Butler

Production Visual Effects

Supervisor

Scott E. Anderson

Production Visual Effects

Producer

Nancy St John

Animatronic Characters

Jim Henson's Creature

Shop

Creature Shop

Supervisor:

John Stephenson

Creative Project

Supervisor:

Neal Scanlan

Head of Production:

William Plant

Animal Visual

Designers:

Jeremy Hunt

Graham High

Barry Sutton

CGI Sculptor:

John Coppinger

Visual Artists:

Mark Coulter

Chris Fitzgerald

Silicone Finisher:

Lindsey McGowan

Fur Design Specialist:

Val Jones

Hair Design Specialist:

Vicky Stockwell

Feather/Anatomy

Designer:

Monique Brown

Animatronic Designers:

Art Director

Colin Gibson

Set Decorator

Kerrie Brown

Draughtsperson

Kerrie Reay

Scenic Artist

Eric Todd

Storyboard Artist

Peter Pound

Special Effects

Dave Roberts

Pyrotechnics

Chris Murray

Ray Fowler

Performance Puppeteers

Mak Wilson

David Greenaway

Allan Trautman

Ian Tregoning

Costume Design

Roger Ford

Make-up/Hair

Carolyn Tyrer

Opening Titles

Animal Logic

End titles

Optical & Graphic

Opticals

Roger Cowland

Ken Phelan

Music

Nigel Westlake

Orchestral Music

Performed by

Victorian Philharmonic

Orchestra

Music Conductors

David Stanhope

Carl Vine

Music Co-ordinator

Christine Woodruff

Songs/Music Extracts

"Jingle Bells" by

J. S. Pierpont "Blue

Moon" by Richard

Rodgers, Lorenzo Hart;

"Symphony No.3 Op 78"

by Camille Saint-Saëns;

"Pizzicati from Sylvia"

by Léo Delibes; "Lyric

Piece No. 28 Spring

(Norwegian Dance)" by

Edward Grieg; "Toreador

Aria from Carmen"

by Georges Bizet; "If I

Had Words" adapted

from Symphony No. 3 by

Camille Saint Saëns,

lyrics by Johnathon

Hodge, performed by

Yvonne Keely, Scott

Fitzgerald; "Cantique de

Jean Racine" by Gabriel

Fauré, performed

by Celeste Lazarenko,

Marile Paxin, Louise

Johnson (harp), Simon

Kenway (conductor);

Hoggett's Dance

Choreography

Annouchka De Jong

Sound Supervisor

Julius Chan

Dialogue Editors

Antony Gray

Libby Villa

Foley Editor

Gavin Myers

Sound Recordists

Ben Osmo

Additional Unit:

Guntis Sics

ADR Recordist

Dana Porter

ADRMixer

Robert Deschaine

Post-production Sound

Mixers

Roger Savage

Ian McLoughlin

Sound Effects Supervisor

Wayne Pashley

Sound Effects Editors

John Penders

Andrew Plain

Angus Robertson

Lawrie Silverstrin

Foley Artists

Steve Burgess

Jerry Long

Atmospheres Editor

Gareth Van Der Hope

Animal Action

Karl Lewis Miller

Animal Department

Babe's Trainer:

Karl Lewis Miller

Dog Training

Supervisor:

Catherine McCallum

Sheep Training

Supervisor:

Caroline Girdlestone

Cats/Poultry Training

Supervisor:

Terry Knapp

Barnyard Animal

Training Supervisor:

James Delaney

Animal Department

Co-ordinator:

Christopher Jones

Cast

Christine Cavanaugh

Babe

Miriam Margolyes

Fly

Danny Mann

Ferdinand

Hugo Weaving

Rex

Miriam Flynn

Maa

Russie Taylor

Cat

Evelyn Krape

Old Ewe

Michael Edward-Stevens

Horse

Charles Bartlett

Cow

Paul Livingston

Rooster

Roscoe Lee Browne

Narrator

James Cromwell

Farmer Arthur Hoggett

Magda Szubanski

Esme Hoggett

Zoe Burton

Daughter

Paul Goddard

Son-in-law

Wade Hayward

Grandson

Brittany Byrnes

Granddaughter

Mary Acres

Valda

Janet Foye

Pamela Hawken

Karen Gough

Country Women

David Webb

The Vet

Marshall Napier

Chairman of Judges

Hec Macmillan

Ken Gregory

Lion's Club Men

Nicholas Lidstone

Sheep Rustler

Trevor Read

Nicholas Blake

Electrical Linesmen

Matthew Long

Sheepdog Trial Officer

John Doyle

Mike Harris

TV Commentators

Ross Bagley

Gemini Barnett

Rachel Davey

Debi Derryberry

Jazzmine Dillingham

Courtland Mead

Kevin Woods

Puppies' Voices

Jane Alden

Kimberly Bailey

Patricia Darbo

Michelle Davison

Julie Forsyth

Maeve Germaine

Rosanna Huffman

Carlyle King

Tina Lifford

Genni Nevinson

Linda Phillips

Linda Phillips

Paige Pollack

Kerry Walker

Sheep Voices

Barbara Harris

The Basketball Diaries

USA 1995

Director: Scott Kalvert

Certificate

18
Distributor
First Independent
Production Company
Island Pictures
Executive Producers
Chris Blackwell
Dan Genetti
Producers
Liz Heller
John Bard Manulis
Line Producer
Kathie Hersch
Production Co-ordinators
Michelle Giordano
LA:
Jenny Cottle
Unit Production Manager
Diana D. Schmidt
Location Manager
Eddy Collyns
Assistant Directors
David C. Dean
Robert C. Albertell
Script Supervisor
Lisa Katcher
Casting
Avy Kaufman
Screenplay
Brian Goluboff
Based on the novel
by Jim Carroll
Director of Photography
David Phillips
Camera Operator
Jim McConkey
Additional:
Phil Oetiker
Steadicam Operator
Jim McConkey
Editors
Dana Congdon
Additional:
Brian Berdan
AFX Graphics
Dv8 Video
Production Designer
Christopher Nowak
Set Decorator
Harriet Zucker
Set Dressers
Jerry Kadar
Jacqueline Arnot
Storyboard Artist
David Cooney
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Steve Kirshoff
Rain Effects
J. C. Brotherhood
Costume Design
David C. Robinson
Wardrobe Supervisors
Jill E. Anderson
Wendy Van Dyke
Make-up
Diane Hammond
Hairstylist
Verne Caruso
Titles/Opticals
Title House/
Chuck Finance
Music
Graeme Revell
Music Performed by
Guitars:
Paul DiBartolo
Music Supervisor
Karyn Rachtmann
Music Editor
Joshua Wingett
Music Co-ordinator
Billy Gottlieb
Songs/Music Extracts
"Catholic Boys" by Jim
Carroll, performed
by Jim Carroll, Pearl
Jam; "Dizzy" by Tyler
Willman, Robert
Martin, Steve Ross,
Daniel Kempthorne,
Mariann Braden,
performed by Green
Apple Quick Step;
"What A Life" by Glyn

Bush, Richard
Whittingham, Robert
McKenzie, performed
by Rockers HiFi;
"Down By The Water"
by and performed by
P. J. Harvey; "Sample:
'Da Bridge Beats";
"Riders on the Storm"
by Jim Morrison, Ray
Manzarek, John
Desmore, Robbie
Krieger, performed
by The Doors; "People
Who Died" by Jim
Carroll, Terrell Winn,
Brian Linsley, Wayne
Woods, Stene Linsley,
performed by The Jim
Carroll Band; "Dancing
Barefoot" by Patti
Smith, Ivan Kral,
performed by Johnette
Napolitano; "Watusi
Latin Boogaloo" by Joe
Altruda, performed
by The Joey Altruda
Latin Explosion;
"Strawberry Wine"
by Paul DiBartolo,
Adam Flax, performed
by Massive Internal
Complications;
"Coming Right Along"
by Jim Auer, Ken
Stringfellow,
performed by The
Posies; "Blind Dogs"
by Kim A. Thayil,
Christopher J. Cornell,
performed by
Soundgarden; "Star"
by Ian Asbury, William
Duffy, performed by
The Cult; "I've Been
Down" by and
performed by Flea
Sound Design
Victor Iorillo
Supervising Sound Editor
Paul Clay
Co-Supervising Sound Editor
Victor Iorillo
Dialogue Editors
Lauren Stephens
Jerry Jacobson
Cindy Rabideau
Patrick O'Sullivan
Ken Miller
ADR Editor
Pat Somerset
ADR Group Co-ordinator
Leigh French
Sound Mixer
William Sarokin
ADR Mixer
Beau Biggart
Foley Mixers
Sina Oroomchi
Bill Mellow
Scoring Mixer
Dan Wallin
Sound Recordist
Larry Hoki
Supervising Sound
Re-recording Mixer
Jeffrey Perkins
Sound Re-recording Mixer
David J. Hudson
Sound Effects Editors
Susan Kurtz
Dan Tripoli
Foley Artists
Shane Shemko
Cam Wagner
Basketball Technical
Adviser
Eric 'Rock' Eisenberg
Research Technical Adviser
Eric L. 'E-Factor'
Weinstein
Stunt Co-ordinator
Edgard Mourino

Cast

Leonardo DiCaprio
Jim Carroll
Lorraine Bracco
Jim's Mother
Marilyn Sokol
Chanting Woman
James Madio
Pedro
Patrick McGaw
Neutron
Mark Wahlberg
Mickey
Roy Cooper
Father McNulty
Vinnie Pastore
Construction Worker
Bruno Kirby
Swiftly
Jimmy Papisiris
Iggy
Nick Gaetani
Lawrence Barth
Referees
Alexander Caberman
Bobo
Ben Jorgensen
Tommy
Josh Mostel
Counterman
Juliette Lewis
Diane Moody
Michael Imperioli
Bobby
Akiko Ashley
Stripper
Ernie Hudson
Reggie Porter

Manny Alfaro

Manny
Cynthia Daniel
Winkie
Brittany Daniel
Blinkie
Eric Betts
Drug Dealer
Joyce R. Korbin
Mugging Victim
Barton Heyman
Confessional Priest
Gary Iorio
Policeman
Toby Huss
Kenny
James Dennis Carroll
Frankie Pinewater
William Webb
Juju Johnson
John Vennema
Mr Rubin
Michael Rapaport
Skinhead
Doc Dougherty
Policeman
John Hoyt
Billy the Bartender
Manny Siverio
Pino

9.194 feet
102 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

Jim Carroll is one of a gang of unruly teenagers in New York. His mother struggles to keep him under control. Subjected to savage corporal punishment by the brutal Father McNulty at his Catholic school, his rebellious spirit is not subdued. Jim and his friends run off to smoke cigarettes, sniff cleaning fluid and cause mayhem on ferries.

A diary allows Jim to give rein to the more sensitive side of his nature, but most of his time is taken up with getting into trouble. Only basketball offers him and his friends a chance to excel. Coached by the kindly and sympathetic Swiftly, they are heading for glory in the high school championships. Unable to share in this prospect is Bobo, one of the gang, who has fallen victim to leukaemia. In a bid to raise his spirits, Jim sneaks him out of hospital and takes him to a strip show on 42nd Street, but this only makes Bobo more unhappy.

Even basketball games become an opportunity for thieving and violence, and Jim and the dangerous Mickey become involved with drugs. Bobo's death and Jim's discovery that Swiftly's interest in him was sexually motivated push him further down the road to delinquency. Only his older black friend Reggie Porter, with whom he plays one-on-one street basketball, can offer him any form of guidance. Reggie can do nothing to stop Jim being expelled from school and thrown out of his house by his despairing mother. But when he finds Jim freezing to death on the street, having sunk into an abyss of junkiedom and prostitution, he saves his life.

With Reggie's help, Jim goes cold turkey, but he is not strong enough to stay off heroin. He robs his friend and descends back into a life of crime. Pedro, one of his gang-mates, is caught by the police during a bungled shoprobbery, and Mickey also goes to prison

for killing a drug dealer. Jim goes back to his mother for help but she calls the police to take him away. He serves three months on Ryker's Island. An audience breaks into applause as it turns out he is reading from his now celebrated diary.

Jim Carroll's torrid autobiographical saga of New York street adolescence has taken a long time to get to the screen, and as if to emphasise this fact, Scott Kalvert's film seems to be set in an unspecified anytime. In opting to play up the timelessness of their story the film's producers have unwittingly exacerbated a serious flaw within *The Basketball Diaries*. What was new and shocking in Jim Carroll's work in the 60s and 70s has since become the stuff of cliché. The street-smart kid's descent into crime and heroin addiction is now too familiar a story, and there is just nothing in this film to distinguish it.

Time has not been especially kind to Carroll's homely poeticisms: "I tried making friends with God by inviting him to my house to watch the World Series... He never showed." And the supposed intimacy of the diary format – the selfimportant young Jim's "Suffice to say"s and "Know this"s – is irritating. Carroll himself (who makes a cameo appearance as a heroin enthusiast, and also acted as consultant) can hardly be blamed for the adolescent aspects of the original diaries, as he wrote them between the ages of 13 and 16, but it is a pity that the film also adopts such a whining selfjustificatory mien.

By all accounts, Leonardo DiCaprio is much happier with the dark, depressing performance he gives here than he was with his breezy comic turn in Sam Raimi's *The Quick and the Dead*. There is something disturbing about this misjudgement. It is not that DiCaprio does anything wrong – he can clearly chew the doormat with the best of them, and no-one could accuse this film of making getting off heroin look easy – it's the fact that he felt the need to make it at all. The list of actors for whom this script was previously developed includes Matt Dillon (who eventually starred in the vastly superior *Drugstore Cowboy*), Eric Stoltz and the late River Phoenix. It is depressing that Phoenix's tragically premature demise does not seem to have diminished the allure of junkie-chic for the actor best qualified to succeed him at the top of the Hollywood charisma tree.

DiCaprio does a fine job early on of conveying Carroll's aspiration to a "presence like a panther, not presence like a chimp". And first time director Kalvert (who cut his teeth on rap videos and *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*) brings a healthy snap to scenes of boyish high spirits, daredevil cliff dives into the Hudson river, and homoerotic on-court bonding. But once the junk kicks in, the fun stops. Which may well be how things happen in real life, but – as with paint taking a long time to dry – that does not necessarily make it something anyone would want to pay to watch.

Ben Thompson

The Brothers McMullen

USA 1995

Director: Edward Burns

Certificate

15
Distributor
20th Century Fox
Production Company
The Brothers McMullen
productions/Marlboro
Road Gang
In association with
Videography
productions/Good
Machine
Executive Producers
Edward J. Burns
Ted Hope
James Schamus
Producers
Edward Burns
Dick Fisher
Associate Producers
Bill Baldwin
Anthony Bregman
Judy Richter
Mary Jane Skalski
Post-production
Supervisors
Bill Baldwin
Anthony Bregman
Assistant Directors
Eden Goldberg
Gallia Hoshia
Script Supervisor
Danielle dos Santos
Screenplay
Edward Burns
Director of Photography
Dick Fisher
Steadicam Operator
Kenny Gronningsater
Opticals
Eastern Optical EFX
Editor
Dick Fisher
Title Design
Peter Himmelman
Design
Music
Seamus Egan

Supervising Sound Editor

Steve Borne
Sound Editors
Sabine Hoffmann
Scott Pittinsky
Rocky Reid
ADR Editor
Steve Silksens
Production Sound Mixers
Mario Porporino
Mike Marson
Andrew Yarme
Stefan Springman
Post-production Sound
Mixer
Dominick Tavella
Catering (fine Irish cooking)
Molly McKenna Burns

Cast

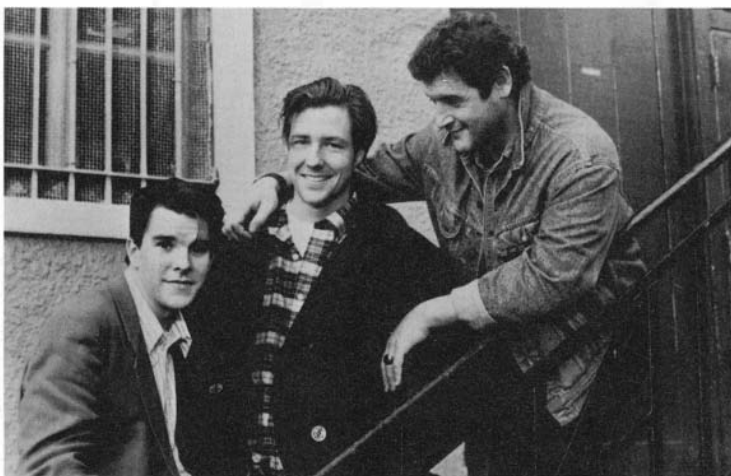
Shari Albert
Susan
Maxine Bahns
Audrey
Catharine Bolz
Mrs McMullen
Connie Britton
Molly
Edward Burns
Barry
Peter Johansen
Marty
Jennifer Jostyn
Leslie
Mike McClone
Patrick
Elizabeth P. McKay
Ann
Jack Mulcahy
Jack

8.847 feet
98 minutes

In colour
Du Art
16mm

Long Island, New York. At the funeral of her husband, Mrs McMullen announces that she is heading to Ireland for a reunion with her lover from 30 years before. Her three grown sons are to be left to fend for themselves; Patrick and Barry move in with their elder brother, Jack, and his wife, Molly, while they try to sort out their lives. Barry, an aspiring scriptwriter, wants to live in downtown Manhattan. But the only place he can afford is rented from under his nose by Audrey, a model who tells him she is married. Patrick debates splitting up with his Jewish girlfriend, Susan. Jack, although devoted to his wife, is tempted to start an affair with Ann, a single woman who makes a pass at him during his wife's 30th birthday party.

Barry bumps into Audrey again, and asks her out. He learns she is not married and is soon smitten with her. Patrick is given the boot by Susan. He begins to spend time with Leslie, an Irish-American girl. She tells him that, as soon as she can, she is going to buy a car and take off for California. Jack starts the affair with Ann. Susan tells Patrick that she is pregnant. A staunch Catholic, he believes he must marry her. Barry, on the verge of selling his first script, warns Audrey that ►



Irritable intimacy: Mike McGlone, Edward Burns, Jack Mulcahy

◀ he can't commit himself to a long-term relationship. She threatens to leave town. Molly learns about Jack's infidelity and confronts him.

Patrick is all set to move in with Susan (who has had a miscarriage) and to begin working for her father. At the last minute, he realises he can't go through with it. Instead, he borrows money from Jack so he can help Leslie buy her car and joins her on a trip out west. Jack and Molly vow to make a new start in their marriage. Barry manages to track Audrey down just before she leaves New York. At first, he still won't make a commitment. But when she heads off, he runs after her. The two embrace, stopping the traffic.

● Winner of this year's Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Festival, *The Brothers McMullen* is a rarity: a low budget, independent film, set in a working class area of New York, that owes more to Nora Ephron than to Martin Scorsese. No guns, drugs, spats in pool halls, ethnic tensions or money troubles disturb the prevailing mood of tranquility. The only worries facing the three brothers here are their tortuous love lives and occasionally strained relations with each other. Debut director Edward Burns creates a charmed, self-enclosed world reminiscent of the one depicted in Whit Stillman's equally talkative *Metropolitan*. However, whereas Stillman's film took place in the rarefied upper-reaches of Manhattan, this romantic comedy unfolds in the less than romantic location of Long Island, a blue collar corner of America, famous in recent years for the Amy Fisher scandal, and for very little else. ("Writers live in Manhattan," aspiring author Barry McMullen [played by Burns] is told by his agent, "Joey Buttafuocos live in Long Island.")

Not that Burns does much to bring his Irish-American neighbourhood to life or to contrast it with other, more familiar, New York localities. There are occasional sorties uptown; one or two sequences set in the park, the street or the subways but, on the whole, the movie stays indoors. This is both an aesthetic and an economic decision: by concentrating on characters and their emotions, close-ups and dialogue, rather than aiming for any big cinematic set-pieces, Burns was able to

make the film on a pittance. (It was shot mainly at weekends over a period of eight months.) He was also able to make it easily accessible to a mass audience. Its soft-centred narrative ends on as mawkish a note as any mainstream Hollywood melodrama.

Whatever debates *The Brothers McMullen* provokes about the shifting, ever more intimate relations between independent film makers and the studios they once defined themselves against, this is certainly an assured, likable debut. It captures brilliantly the irritable intimacy between the three adult brothers forced to share a house. From the early sequence, in which they embark on an absurdly earnest discussion about the relationship between JFK and Marilyn Monroe, to their last scene together, in which Patrick prepares to head to California with his new girlfriend, the trio show an easy, comic rapport. They all have different philosophies toward life, and are wont to give each other plenty of pompous, unsolicited advice. Burns expertly weaves the three different strands of the narrative together. As a tyro filmmaker, he may not offer much in terms of formal innovation, but his film is seamlessly edited and boasts some cracking one-liners, most of them delivered in throwaway, deadpan fashion. There are occasional sequences, especially those involving guilt-stricken Catholic Patrick, in which interior monologues are used to heighten the comic effect. There are also some poignant moments in which Burns captures a telling glance or a gesture, for instance Molly, baffled by her husband's infidelity, or Susan, finally realising that Patrick is going to leave her.

Burns could easily be accused of a certain auteurial narcissism: after all, he writes, produces, directs, edits, stars...and gets the girl. His character, Barry, charismatic but insufferably arrogant, is the least sympathetic of the brothers. The saccharine finale, which sees him reunited with Audrey, is shot like a Pepsi commercial. At this point, the film loses its fizz and irony. Still, the acutely observed dialogue, fresh performances and general free-wheeling charm of everything that has gone before ensure that even such a cornball ending is just about palatable.

Geoffrey Macnab

Candyman 2: Farewell to the Flesh

USA 1995

Director: Bill Condon

Certificate

18

Distributor

PolyGram Filmed Entertainment

Production Company

Propaganda Films

Executive Producer

Clive Barker

Producers

Sigurjon Sigvatsson

Gregg D. Feinberg

Associate Producer

Anna C. Miller

Production Executive

Peter Heller

Supervising Producer

Tim Clawson

Production Co-ordinators

Michelle Erby

Set:

Mark Castro

New Orleans:

Edith D. Leblanc

Unit Production Manager

Gregg D. Feinberg

Location Managers

Los Angeles:

Barry S. Jones

Paul Boydston

Bruce Margolis

New Orleans:

Julie Duvic

Post-production Supervisor

Helene Mulholland

Assistant Directors

Mary Ellen Woods

Jeff Shiffman

Lee H. Grant

New Orleans:

Bret Cody

Casting

Carol Lewis

Associate:

Alison Stuart

ADR Voice:

Leigh French

Script Supervisor

Amy Diamond

Screenplay

Rand Ravich

Mark Kruger

Story

Clive Barker

Director of Photography

Tobias Schliessler

Visual Effects Camera

Marcus Tate

Peter Juneau

Camera Operators

Eric J. Goldstein

T. Ryan

Steadicam Operator

David Lukenback

Special Visual Effects

Introvision

International

Executive Producer:

Andrew Naud

Creative Supervisor:

John P. Mesa

Line Producer:

Paul Gray

Digital Visual Effects

Topix

Supervisor:

Daniel Radford

Animators

Chad Hammes

Mike Lafave

Peter Blinn

Max Ivins

Editor

Virginia Katz

Production Designer

Barry Robison

Art Director

Dawn Snyder Stebler

Set Design

Robert Goldstein

Stephanie J. Gordon

Set Decorator

Suzette Sheets

Set Dresser

Teusa Koiwai

Storyboard Artists

Janet Kusnick

Mike Swift

Caroline's Portrait

Dave Dies Scenic

Marion Dies

Esplanade Mansion Murals

John Stewart

Charcoals

Katherine Adams

Janet Kusnick

Head Sculptor

Richard Zemetis

Special Effects

Ultimate Effects

Supervisor:

John Hartigan

Foreman:

Gary L. King

Costume Design

Bruce Finlayson

Wardrobe Supervisor

Charlie Amateau

Key Make-up

Sheri P. Short

Special Make-up Effects

Makeup Effects Lab

Head:

Douglas J. White

Key Hairstylist

Andre Blaise

Title Design

Wendon

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research Corporation

Music

Philip Glass

Philip Glass' Music

Conductor

Michael Reisman

Music Producers

Don Christensen

Philip Glass' Music:

Kurt Munkacs

Music Supervisors

Jim Keller

Don Christensen

Music Editor

Lori Eschler

Songs

"Blue Mood" by and

performed by Steve

Holley, Jon Paris;

"Postman" by and

performed by Eddie

Batos; "I'll See You

Somewhere By and By"

by Danny Louis

Sound Design

Ben Wilkins

Supervising Sound Editor

Jon Johnson

Supervising Dialogue Editor

Bruce Stubblefield

Dialogue Editors

Patricio Libenson

Greg Cook

Stuart Nelson

ADREditor

Don Sylvester

Foley Editor

Solange Schwalbe

Sound Mixer

Walter Hoylman

ADR Mixer

Dean Drabin

Re-recording Mixers

Gary Bougeois

Brad Sherman

Production Sound Transfers

Studio Services

Sound Effects Editors

Michael Chandler

Guy Tsujimoto

Keith Biederbeck

Foley Artists

Joanie Rowe

Sean Rowe

Mardi Gras Consultant

Henri Schindler

Stunt Co-ordinator

William Washington

Bee Wrangler

Norman E. Gary

Bird Wrangler

Rob Bloch

Cast

Tony Todd

Candyman

Kelly Howan

Annie Tarrant

Timothy Carhart

Paul McKeever

Veronica Cartwright

Octavia Tarrant

William O'Leary

Ethan Tarrant

Fay Hauser

Pam Carver

Joshua Gibran Mayweather

Matthew

Bill Nunn

Reverend Ellis

Matt Clark

Honore Thibideaux

David Gianopoulos

Detective Ray Levesque

Caroline Barclay

Caroline Sullivan

Michael Bergeron

Coleman Tarrant

Brianna Blanchard

Young Caroline

Cloiel Bordetier

Liz

Russell Buchanan

Voice of Kingfish

Nate Bynum

Daniel Dupont

Monica L. Monica

Reporters

Sandy Byrd

Patricia Sansone

Women in Bookstore

Eric Cadora

Man in Bookstore

Carl N. Ciafalo

Bartender

Michael Culkin

Phillip Purcell

Stephen Dunn

Brian Joseph Moore

Thugs

Glen Gomez

Kingfish

Steven Hartman

Young Boy

Margaret Howell

Clara

Ralph Joseph

Mr Jeffries

Erin Labranche

Little Girl Doctor

Carl Leblanc

Little Boy King

George Lemore

Drew

Maria Mason

Befuddled Teacher

Randy Oglesby

Heyward Sullivan

Steve Picerni

Police Guard

Eric Pierson

Ben, Busboy

Terrence Rosemore

Suspicious Man at

Matthew's House

Bernard Rose's *Candyman*, adapted from Clive Barker's short story 'The Forbidden', remains perhaps the best attempt at translating Barker's distinctive tone to the cinema. It was also the most commercially successful of all Barker-related films. However, in the 90s, there is no such thing as a one-off horror hit and so this is not merely an attempt to come up with a sequel to Rose's *Candyman* but a twisting of the premise into the blueprint for a potential money-spinning franchise along the lines of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* or *Hellraiser* series.

Tony Todd's dignified, hollow-voiced, hook-handed urban legend is here promoted to *Fangoria* cover-boy status in the hope that he can take a place in the monster pantheon between Freddy Krueger and *Hellraiser*'s Pinhead, which means the film has to be entirely structured around his appearances. *Candyman*, by contrast, was actually about Helen Lyle, played in the original by Virginia Madsen, a character who is barely mentioned here and sorely missed. The power of the monster was in his elusiveness, which the sequel fritters away as he turns up every ten minutes to stick his hook into yet more disposable supporting stooges.

Even worse is the feebleness of the central thread. Faced with the need to come up with a plot that focuses on *Candyman* rather than a potential victim, screenwriters Rand Ravich and Mark Kruger have resorted to the most ancient and tiresome cliché of the genre: the monster's search for the reincarnation of his lost love (used in *The Mummy*, *Blacula* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*). It was all very well the first time round to recount one possible origin for *Candyman*, but it's quite another to use a prosaic enactment of his martyrdom (complete with cackling, honey-pouring rednecks) in lieu of a climax for this picture.

Bill Condon, screenwriter of the underrated *Strange Behaviour* and *Strange Invaders*, made a directing debut with *Sister, Sister*, an effective Southern gothic with *Baby Jane*-level performances from Judith Ivey and Jennifer Jason Leigh. This assignment is perhaps an attempt to gain a solid commercial credit before proceeding to more personal work: the dilapidated Southern mansion and plantation flashbacks are tangential spin-offs from *Sister, Sister* but hardly make much of an impression. Given the subtitle ('Carnival' means 'Farewell to the Flesh', loosely), the Mardi Gras setting is surprisingly throwaway, though there is a running DJ commentary for all the world like *Reservoir Dogs* without the song rights clearances.

A few decent performers (Bill Nunn, Matt Clark, Veronica Cartwright) are underused while Kelly Rowan, last seen as the heroine of *The Gate*, isn't up to the femme role. Tony Todd, whose character never seems to wonder whether or not murdering his beloved's entire family will endear him to her, reacts to the star turn spotlight by exercising rather too much ham.

Kim Newman

Crimson Tide

USA 1995

Director: Tony Scott

Certificate

15

Distributor

Buena Vista
Production Company
Hollywood Pictures

Executive Producers

Bill Unger
Lucas Foster
Mike Moder

Producers

Don Simpson
Jerry Bruckheimer
Associate Producer

James W. Skotchdopole

Production Co-ordinator

Tracy L. Kettler

Unit Production Manager

Michael Fotrell

Location Manager

Craig Pointes

Assistant Directors

James W. Skotchdopole
John Wildermuth
Angela C. Tortu

Script Supervisor

P. R. Tooke

Casting

Victoria Thomas
Associate:

Jeanne McCarthy

Matthew B. Barry

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Michael Schiffer

Story

Michael Schiffer

Richard P. Henrick

Director of Photography

Dariusz Wolski

Visual Effects Photography

Scott Beattie

Scott Campbell

Rick Johnson

Craig Moore

George Prior

Kevin Fitzgerald

Underwater Photography

Jim Dickson

Camera Operators

Michael St Hilaire

Martin Schaeer

Underwater:

Robert Bruce Dickson

Visual Effects

Dream Quest Images

Supervisor:

Hoyt Yeatman

Editors:

Thomas R. Bryant

Kevin Clark

Senior Producer:

Dennis Hoffman

Executive Producer:

Keith Shartle

Production Co-

ordinator:

Crys Forsyth-Smith

Producer:

Cecil Kramer

Supervisor:

Dan DeLeeuw

Producer:

Anjelica Casillas

Production Supervisor:

Rob Burton

Compositing

Supervisor:

Blaine Kennison

Art Director:

Marlo Pabon

Graphics

Video Image

Animation Senior CG

Rob Dressel

Editor

Chris Lebenzon

Associate Editor

David Drescher

Production Designer

Michael White

Art Directors

Donald B. Woodruff

James J. Murakami

Dianne Wager

Set Design

Richard Lawrence

Nick Navarro

Set Decorator

Mickey S. Michaels

Production Illustrator

Sean Hargreaves

Underwater Miniature

Producer

Robert Stedd

Model Shop

Supervisor:

David Goldberg

Co-ordinator:

Warren Farina

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Alfred A. DiSarro Jnr

Special Effects

John Gray

Costume Design

George L. Little

Costume Supervisor

Ellis Cohen

Make-up

Ellen Wong

Prosthetics

Michael Mills

Hairstylist

Ronald Scott

Title Design

Robert Dawson

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Hans Zimmer

Music Conductors

Nick Glennie-Smith

Harry Gregson-

Williams

Orchestrations

Bruce Fowler

Ladd McIntosh

Suzette Moriarty

Nick Glennie-Smith

Choir Music Supervisor

Maggie Rodford

Music Editors

Bob Badami

Will Kaplan

Music Consultant

Alan Meyerson

Songs/Music Extracts

"Nowhere to Run" by

Brian Holland, Lamont

Dozier, Edward

Holland Jnr, "Dancing

in the Street" by Ivy

Jo Hunter, William

Stevenson, Marvin

Gayle, performed by

Martha Reeves and

the Vandellas; "Sweet

Home Alabama" by

Gary Rossington,

Ronnie Van Zant,

Edward King,

performed by Lynyrd

Skyndr; "The Real

Ean" by Nick Glennie-

Smith; "Gone Again"

by Terry Moline,

performed by The

Gathering; "Piano

Sonata No.14, op.27

no.2" by Ludwig Van

Beethoven, performed

by Tatiana Nikolayeva;

"Piano Trio in E Flat,

D929 op.100 - Andante

con moto" by Franz

Schubert; "Eben, ne

andro lontana" (from

"La wally" by Alfredo

Catalini, performed

by Miriam Gucci, BRT

Philharmonic

Orchestra

Supervising Sound Editor

George Watters II

Sound Editors

F. Hudson Miller

R. J. Palmer

Midge Costin

Suhail Kafy

Frank Howard

Gary Wright

Kim Secrist

Supervising ADR Editor

Juno J. Ellis

ADR Editor

Denise Horta

Supervising Foley Editor

Victoria Martin

Foley Editors

Matthew Harrison

James Likowski

Fred Burke

Sound Mixers

William B. Kaplan

Music:

Jay Rifkin

Paul Hulme

ADR Mixers

Bob Baron

Charleen Richards

Foley Mixer

Eric Gotthelf

Sound Recordists

Dan Sharp

John Brilhante

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Kevin O'Connell

Rick Kline

Gregory H. Watkins

Sound Effects

John Fasal

Foley Artists

Kevin Bartnof

Catherine Rowe

Technical Advisers

Skip Beard

Malcolm S. Wright

Stunt Co-ordinator

Steve Picerni Jnr

Cast

Denzel Washington

Ron Hunter

Gene Hackman

Captain Ramsey

Matt Craven

Roy Zimmer

George Dzundza

Cob

Viggo Mortensen

Lieutenant Peter Ince

('Weps')

James Gandolfini

Lieutenant Bobby

Dougherty

Rocky Carroll

Lieutenant Darik

Westergaard

Jaime P. Gomez

Ood Mahoney

Michael Milhoan

Hunsicker

Scott Burkholder

TSO Billy Linkletter

Danny Nucci

Danny Rivetti

Lillo Brancato Jnr

Russell Vossler

Eric Bruskotter

Bennefield

Rick Schroder

Lieutenant Paul

Hellerman

Steve Zahn

William Barnes

Marcello Thedford

Lawson

R. J. Knoll

Marty Sotille

Billy Devlin

Navigator

Matt Barry

Planesman

Christopher Birt

Helmsman

Jim Boyce

Driving Officer

Jacob Vargas

KaiLennox

Sonarmen

◀ bridge. The ensuing Mexican stand-off is only resolved when, minutes before the rebel missiles will be fuelled and ready, the radio is fixed and the second EAM received in full: the rebels have surrendered and the launch must be terminated. At the court martial back at Pearl Harbor, Ramsey announces his early retirement and recommends that Hunter should be given his command.

● Nine years ago producers Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer and director Tony Scott took us to the brink of World War Three in their paeon to US Navy fighter pilots, *Top Gun*. This time the trio have put another branch of the Navy in the spotlight and – significantly – without the co-operation of the US Department of Defense, who took exception to the film's portrayal of a mutiny at sea.

But *Crimson Tide* is not just *Top Gun* underwater: it's a tribute to the producers' skill that they can keep the style of their product so distinctive while also keeping up with the times. Russians, of course, still make handy villains: all it takes is a topical reference to Chechnya and a Zhirinovskiy-like "ultra-nationalist". In a more definite break with the warmongering, Cold War rhetoric of *Top Gun*, though, it is the avoidance of war – the realisation that the *Alabama* doesn't have to attack – that provides the film's climax. *Crimson Tide* harks back instead to the nuclear scare movies of the mid-60s. The basic situation of the irrevocable "emergency action message" echoes *Fail Safe* and *Dr Strangelove*, while the opposition of a black liberal and a hard-bitten white Naval veteran recalls the confrontation of Sidney Poitier and Richard Widmark in *Strangelove* producer James B. Harris's excellent *The Bedford Incident*.

With an eye on the box office, *Crimson Tide* has also taken on board the lessons of two of last year's surprise action hits. Though the screenplay is credited to Michael Schiffer, it was extensively rewritten, at Scott's insistence, by Quentin Tarantino (who worked with Scott on *True Romance*). As a result, the characters keep breaking off from the business in hand to engage in hip exchanges about *Star Trek*, the *Silver Surfer* and, in a post-modern flourish, the relative merits of other submarine movies such as *Run Silent, Run Deep* and *The Enemy Below*. In true Tarantino style, the film also climaxes with a Mexican stand-off. (Uncredited rewrites were also contributed by Robert Towne and Steve Zaillian, and one of the film's incidental pleasures is playing spot the screenwriter; an early discussion between Ramsey and Hunter about different interpretations of Clausewitz's theory of war, for instance, can safely be attributed to Towne.)

Crimson Tide's structure, meanwhile, owes a debt to *Speed*, which proved that the fail-safe way to keep a 90s audience gripped is to cram a preposterous succession of races against the clock into a real-time frame. *Crimson Tide* pivots around a relentless series of count-downs. The *Alabama* almost sinks to

"hold crush depth" at 1,850 feet below sea level. The 15-minute missile launch preparation, for which it must rise of 150 feet, is set in operation (twice). It also awaits the impact of enemy torpedoes, retreats to 1,000 yards from the rebel submarine so that its own torpedoes have time to arm themselves etc. etc. – all within the outer concentric countdown of the hour from when the rebels start fuelling their missiles to when they attain "launch capacity".

For all its manifold efforts to keep up with the latest developments in Russian politics and Hollywood story structure, *Crimson Tide* still bears the unmistakable stamp of Simpson, Bruckheimer and Scott, not only from *Top Gun* but also from their intervening collaborations, *Beverly Hills Cop II* and *Days of Thunder*. The obsession with jargon has reached a new apogee here: even the characters' names are Naval jargon ("Weps" equals Weapons Officer, "Cob" equals Chief Of Bridge). With its non-stop litany of EAMs and DEFCON 2s, as regulation computer print-out captions across the screen keep us tuned to "Zulu time" (Greenwich Mean, apparently), *Crimson Tide* is in fact a film about military jargon; after all, the central conflict between Ramsey and Hunter revolves around their differing interpretations of Navy regulations.

Equally distinctive is Tony Scott's shooting style: tilted, tight-cropped telephoto close-ups, backlighting and clouds of diffusion smoke. Scott can make anything look glamorous; in fact, he seems incapable of making anything look unglamorous, even Ramsey's Jack Russell cocking its leg. About to take the *Alabama* below the waves, Ramsey bids a fond farewell to the golden smog floating above the ocean with the quip, "I don't trust air you can't see," – words which should be inscribed on Tony Scott's gravestone.

In *Crimson Tide*, Scott takes his visual stylisation even further than usual. To differentiate the various areas of the submarine in which the action unfolds, Scott colour-codes them, an excuse to bathe the actors in floods of gorgeous primary colours; at times, with sailors stripped to their singlets, *Crimson Tide* could almost be mistaken for Fassbinder's hymn to a very different branch of nautical life, *Querelle*. Meanwhile, with Ramsey and Hunter's verbal duels focusing on the size of their cigars and the relative merits of black and white stallions, the homoerotic subtext seems to be rising, if not quite to the surface, at least to missile-launch depth. Bearing in mind Tarantino's contribution, it's hard to believe that anyone involved with *Crimson Tide* could be unaware of his celebrated, Pauline Kael-inspired deconstruction of *Top Gun*'s gay undercurrent in the film *Sleep With Me*. Which begs the question: Are they doing it deliberately? That would surely be the ultimate sign that those high priests of 80s machismo, Simpson, Bruckheimer and Scott, were willing to adapt themselves to the spirit of the 90s.

John Wrathall

Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde

USA 1995

Director: David F. Price

Certificate

12

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

Rastar/Leider-Shapiro

In association with

Savoy Pictures

Executive Producer

John Morrissey

Producers

Robert Shapiro

Jerry Leider

Co-producer

Frank K. Isaac

Production Co-ordinators

Johanne Pelletier

Jim Disensi

LA:

Lark Bernini

Production Managers

Barbara Shrier

LA:

Wayne Morris

Unit Manager

Michel Chauvin

Location Manager

Pierre Masse

Post-production Supervisor

Michael J. Harker

Assistant Directors

Pedro Gandol

Francine Langlois

Pierre Roy

L.A.

Christine Larson

David Larson

Script Supervisor

France Boudreau

Casting

Mike Fenton

Allison Cowitt

Canada:

Elite

Nadia Rona

Vera Miller

Screenplay

Tim John

Oliver Butcher

William Davies

William Osborne

Story

David Price

Suggested by *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll*

& *Mr. Hyde* by Robert

Louis Stevenson

Director of Photography

Tom Priestley

Camera Operators

Maurice Roy

Sylvain Brault

Terry Moews

Motion Control:

Mark Hardin

Visual Effects

Dream Quest Images

Supervisor:

Tim Landry

Producer:

Melissa Taylor

Video/Graphic Displays

Video Image

Co-ordinator:

Cara Latzel

Digital Artists

Brian Addams

Jeff Burks

Darin Hollings

David Lauer

Brian Leach

Amy Pfaffinger

Teddy Yang

Genevieve Yee

Graphic Design

Carl Lessard

Composing Art Editor

Marlo Pabson

Editor

Tony Lombardo

Production Designer

Gregory Melton

Art Director

Guy Lalande

Set Decorators

Francine Danis

Paul Hotte

Michèle Nolet

Ginette Robitaille

Draughtsman

Raymond Larose

Key Scenic Painter

François Bédard

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Louis Craig

Costume Design

Molly Maginnis

Wardrobe Supervisor

Nicoletta Massone

Key Make-up Artist

Diane Simard

Special Make-up Effects

Kevin Yagher

Manager:

Chris Yagher

Supervisor:

Thom Floutz

Prosthetic Technician

Adrien Morot

Nails Technician

Carol Martineau

Hairstylists

Joani Yarbrough

Bob Pritchett

Title Design

Swan Bradley

Music

Mark McKenzie

Additional:

Robert Irving

Orchestrations

Mark McKenzie

Patrick Russ

Music Editors

Dick Bernstein

John Finklea

Jim Young

Music Consultant

Bones Howe

Songs/Music Extracts

"Brand New Me" by

Steven Nikolas,

Brendon Sibley, Mich

(Cutfather) Hansen,

Joe Belmaati,

performed by Jean

McClain; "Chemistry"

by Les Pierce, Hollye

Leven, performed by

Rahsaan; "Girl U Want"

by Mark Mothersbaugh,

Gerald Casale,

performed by DEVO;

"If I Could Fool My

Heart" by Robert Irving,

Kevin Quinn,

performed by Liz

Barnitz; "It Might

Get Hot Tonight".

"We're in a Partyin'

Mood" by Robert Irving,

Kevin Quinn; "The

Hababeros" by Georges

Bizet, performed

by Patricia Swanson;

"Polovtsian Dance"

by Alexander Borodin,

performed by Mark

Governor

Sound Design/Supervising

Sound Editor

David Lewis Yewdall

Co-supervising Sound Editor

Dwayne Avery

Sound Editors

Jim Yant

David Spence

David Stone

John Joseph Thomas

John Edwards-Younger

Thom Brennen

Dialogue Editors

Dwayne Avery

Edward M. Hirsch

Steven Lotwis

ADREditor

Gail Clark

Foley Editor

Thomas Burke

Location Sound

Michel Charron

Patrick Rousseau

ADR/Foley Mixer

Robert Deschaine

ADR/Foley Recordist

Dana Johnson-Porter

Sound Re-recordist

Brian Lucas

Re-recording Mixers

Robert W. Glass Jr

Dan Wallin

Stanley Kastner

Foley Artists

Zane Bruce

Robert Friedman

Cynthia Merrill

Joe Sabella

Stunt Co-ordinator

Minor Mustain

Cast

Sean Young

Helen Hyde

Tim Daly

Dr Richard Jacks

Lysette Anthony

Sarah Carver

Stephen Tobolowsky

Oliver Mintz

Harvey Weinstein

Yves DuBois

Thea Vidale

Jeremy Piven

Pete Walston

Polly Bergen

Mrs Unterveldt

Stephen Shellen

Larry

Sheena Larkin

Mrs Mintz

John Franklyn-Robbins

Professor Manning

Aron Tager

Lawyer

Jane Connell

Aunt Agatha

Julie Cobb

DuBois' Psychiatrist

Kim Morgan Greene

Paparazzi Lady/

Party Lady

Victor Knight

Bill

Mark Camacho

Waiter

Robert Wuhl

Man with Lighter

Susan Trustman

Cocktail Party Woman

Manon Deschenes

Jean-Claude Page

Gorgeous Models

Maria Stanton

Dress Admirer

Donna Barnes

Young Woman

No doubt coincidentally, this film combines elements of two Hammer Films' reworkings of Robert Louis Stevenson's story *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*: *The Ugly Duckling*, in which Bernard Bresslaw as a meek descendent of the original Jekyll becomes a hulking teddy boy, and *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*, in which prissy Ralph Bates transforms into homicidally kittenish Martine Beswicke. There are a few overtones also of the soon-to-be-remade *The Nutty Professor* and the nearly forgotten *Dr. Heckyl and Mr. Hype*, and a sex-change wrinkle that has been exploited not only by *Sister Hyde* but also by the hardcore porno film *Oversexed*. This would hardly win points for the originality of its concept then, even if it were not a glossily garish comedy confection full of embarrassed performers straining in inappropriate underwear for cheap laughs.

Some kind of a peak in excruciation is reached by a running gag in which Harvey Fierstein is agonised to be suddenly attracted to a woman and relieved that Helen turns out to be Richard. But the film is littered with embarrassingly ham-fisted farce. Tim Daly, the only member of the *Diner* cast who hasn't gone on to be a star, finds himself in inexplicable situations, mostly naked but sometimes in female underwear, as his co-workers and fiancée gawp at him. *Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde* was originally intended as a re-teaming of Jim Carrey and Sean Young, stars of *Ace Ventura Pet Detective*, but Carrey's departure for the big pay-day stratosphere has left an opening Daly can hardly be blamed for failing to fill. After all, it is hard to imagine Carrey would have allowed Young all the fun scenes and saved only the humiliating 'straight' sequences for himself.

David F. Price, who has previously directed only straight-to-video sequels (*Son of Darkness: To Die For II*, *Children of the Corn II: The Final Sacrifice*), tries for a hectic, perverse feel and at least has the benefit of bitch diva Young. It's a more misogynist film than *Sister Hyde*, and Young a less ambiguous figure than Beswicke, who was at once a seductress and Jack the Ripper. Evidently, there has been a great deal of post-production pruning, reshooting and rearranging. Typical of the film's refusal to think things through is the moment when Richard inherits both *Dr Jekyll's* notes and a signed first edition of the Stevenson novel and assumes he can make more money with the notes.

Kim Newman



Gender bender: Sean Young

Elisa

France 1994

Director: Jean Becker

Certificate

15

Distributor

Gala Films

Production Companies

Films Christian Fechner/Solo productions/TF1 Films production

In association with Canal +/BNP Images 2

Executive Producers

Hervé Truffaut

Didier Pain

Producer

Henri Brichetti

Production Co-ordinators

Marc Guidetti

Eric Vidart-Loeb

Jean-Claude Landon

Georges Dognon

Production Manager

Daniel Baschieri

Location Manager

Sikander Hasan

Post-production Supervisor

Catherine Adart

Assistant Directors

Laure Prévost

Pascal Fouineau

Julien Eudes

Fabrice Grange

Sylvia Chifflet-Allegre

Script Supervisor

Brigitte Hedou-Prat

Casting

Jean-Paul Becker

Alain Munch

Screenplay

Jean Becker

Fabrice Carazo

Screenplay Collaboration

Edmond Ravot

Director of Photography

Etienne Becker

Steadicam Operator

JorgWidmer

Editor

Jacques Witt

Art Director

Thérèse Ripaud

Special Effects

Philippe Hubin

Costume Design

Gil Noir

Make-up

Muriel Paupere

Judith Gayo

Frédérique Marcus-

Ruault

Hairstylist

Patrick Villain

Music

Zbigniew Preisner

Music Performed by

Sinfonia Varsovia

Songs/Music Extracts

"Elisa" by Serge

Gainsbourg, Michel

Colombier, performed

by Serge Gainsbourg;

"Another Christmas"

by Zbigniew Preisner,

Boris Bergman, Paul

Ives, performed by Paul

Ives; "Caruso" by Lucio

Dalla, performed by

Lucio Dalla, Luciano

Pavarotti; "Heru

Mertar/Don't Go So

Far Away" by Arto

Tuncboyaci, performed

by Al di Meola; "House

Fever" (Skippy Dub)

by Craig Drysdale, John

MacDonald, performed

by The Burger Queens;

"Le Denicheur" by

Gilbert, Agel, Dani-

derff, performed by

Emile Prud'Homme;

"Oh Les filles" by Eddie

Vartan, "Les Plaisirs

demodes" by Charles

Aznavour, Georges

Garvarentz, performed

by Jacques Dautriche,

Orchestre Sam'dy

Show; "Harramt

Ahebak" by Omar

Batticho, Salah El

Sharnobi, performed

by Warda; "Les Trois

iris" by Pierre Roussat,

performed by

L'Orchestre Pierre

Roussat; "Babel Zop

Rap" by Edmond Ravot,

Igor Bolender,

performed by Sekkou

Sall; "O nuit d'amour"

by Augustin Mahot,

performed by Les Petits

Chanteurs de Saint-

Laurent; "C'est Noel"

by Pierre Schuler,

performed by Le Petit

Choeur du Collège de

Montreux, Charles

Jauquier; "She Doesn't

Wanna Go" by Kinney,

Nielson, Sullivan,

Fowler, performed by

Drivin.N.Cryin; "Smoke

Gets in your Eyes by

Jérôme Kern, Otto

Karbach, performed

by Maurice Vander;

"Le Non demande en

mariage" by Georges

Brassens, performed

by The Giants of Jazz;

"Psyche Rock" by

François Henry, Michel

Colombier, performed

by Pierre Henry, Michel

Colombier

Choreography

Guy Haggege

Sound

Jean-Louis Ughetto

William Flageollet

Sound Mixers

Eric Bonnard

Nadine Muse

Sound Effects

Laurent Levy

Astrology Consultant

Michaël Delmar

Cast

Vanessa Paradis

Marie

Gérard Depardieu

Jacques Lébovitch

Clothilde Courau

Solange

SekkouSall

Ahmed

Florence Thomassin

Elisa

Werner Schreyer

Conductor

Michel Bouquet

Samuel

Philippe Léotard

Gitane Smoker

Catherine Rouvel

Manina

Melvil Poupaud

Pharmacist's Son

Olivier Saladin

Kevin

Bernard Verley

Entrepreneur

Reine Barthe

Grandmother

André Julien

Grandfather

Gérard Chailou

Claude Chapelier

Bernard Lincot

Owner of Bar

des Picheurs

Eugène Riguidel

Customer in Bar

des Picheurs

José Garcia

Taxi Passenger

Philippe Duquesne

Dodine Herry

P.M.U. Owners

TecoCelio

Samuel's Lover

Thomas Dominique

Ninou Fratellini

Social Service Tutors

Claudine Regnier

Social Service

Counselor

Jean-Pierre Bagot

HLM Tenant

Dominique Bluzet

Jérôme

Jenny Cleve

Marie's Landlord

Malcolm Conrath

Nightclub Barman

Sidy Lamine Diara

Lydia Ewande

Carole Jacobson

Firmin Richard

P.M.U. Customers

Jacques Dautriche

Singer with Orchestra

Isabel Nachmann-Perault

Marie, age 3

Sylvestre Amoussou

Christine Aurel

Jean Becker

Philippe Beglia

François Clavier

AlfredCohen

François Delaive

Bass Ohem

AkonioDolo

Valérie Dupin

El Kebir

Natacha Feurich

Frédérique Garnier

Samir Guesmi

Mukuna Kashala

BertheLe Run

Dominique Marcas

Marie-Angèle Margaritis

Marie-Laurence

Laurentine Milebo

Laure Poulet

Nar Sene

Jean-Baptiste Tiemele

Olivier Till

10,299 feet

114 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Anamorphic

Subtitles

In Paris, ten-year-old Marie's distraught mother, Elisa, tries unsuccessfully to smother Marie on Christmas Eve and then shoots herself in the head. Apparently, Elisa had resorted to prostitution to make ends meet and it would seem that Marie's father was sent to prison for pimping. Refusing to live with her grandparents, Marie grows up in a reform school where she befriends Solange.

By the time Marie and Solange reach their late teens, they have learnt how to survive on the streets and have teamed up with a young boy, Ahmed. Marie searches for the truth about her mother and father. She confronts her grandparents, who precipitated Elisa's suicide by refusing to take her in when she was desperate. She meets a man whom her mother used to fellate for money and humiliates him. A popular song called 'Elisa' turns out to have been written by her father. After throwing a Christmas party for her friends, Marie sets off for the island from which her father once sent her mother a postcard with the notes of the song on it as a message.

On the island, she discovers that her father, Jacques Lébovitch, is the local drunk. She tries to kill him with the gun her mother shot herself with, but fails to go through with it. Instead she decides to torment him slowly with flirting, dropping hints along the way about her identity. At a local dance, Lébovitch recognises the resemblance between her and Elisa, and realises that she is his daughter. Back at his hut, Marie tries to fuck her father, but he refuses to comply. Lébovitch's flashback reveals that the prostitution was all Elisa's own idea, and Marie finds a letter that suggests he was only spending time at the island when she thought he was in jail. At a lighthouse, father and daughter share a reconciling familial embrace.

A sentimental story of an orphaned urchin in search of her papa, *Elisa* is based on a song of the same name by the late Serge Gainsbourg, one of France's most beloved *chanteurs* and to whom the film is dedicated. The song, which concerns the

relationship between a man of 40 and a girl of 20, is played frequently throughout the film and has a key role in the narrative. Considering the movie's preoccupation with paedophilia, teenage sexuality and incestuous desire, one wonders if Gainsbourg's more notorious ditty, 'Lemon Incest' on which Gainsbourg duetted with his own daughter, Charlotte, might have been more appropriate. Gainsbourg could transmute such controversial material into something provocative and clever as well as seedy. However, the film-makers behind *Elisa* can only manage the seediness, which they deliver in packets enough to garden Versailles.

The story itself is incoherently told, and riddled with inconsistencies and the kind of belief-impoverishing improbabilities usually found in nineteenth-century novels: why does Marie, the 20-year-old, own the gun her mother shot herself with; if Marie's so keen on her friend Solange using condoms, why doesn't she use one when she deflowers their street buddy Ahmed (her smug idea of a 'gift' to him); and if the song 'Elisa' was so popular how could its author, Marie's father Jacques Lébovitch, have failed to have heard it and asserted his rights to the royalties, thus saving himself from a life of impoverishment?

Some of those involved have explored this murky terrain before, such as starlet Vanessa Paradis who has built her career both in rock music and film on this wild-child image and who played a similar teen seductress of middle-aged men in Jean-Claude Brisseau's *Noce blanche*. Likewise, Gérard Depardieu, playing Lébovitch, has been discovered almost interfering with his on-screen children not just once but twice in the same role in the two versions of *My Father the Hero*. But then the *Lolita* syndrome has been a constant source of excitation for many French male directors.

Adding insult to injury, the film is badly made. The editing compounds the plot's problems with its jerky shiftings, like a naughty child shuffling guiltily from foot to foot. The camera-work seems often out of focus, and many scenes are nastily lit, especially the close-ups of Paradis which bathe her in a sickly, viscous yellow glow, making her look like a Pre-Raphaelite model drowning in Listerine. Jean Becker, son of the more famous director Jacques Becker, is best known for the similarly salacious 1983 film *Été meurtrier* (*One Deadly Summer*), a complex thriller that was something of an art house hit

Institute Benjamenta, or This Dream People Call Human Life

United Kingdom 1995

Directors: Brothers Quay

Certificate

Not Yet Issued

Distributor

ICA Projects

Production Company

British Screen/Channel

Four present

A Koninck production

In association with

Image Forum

Pandora Film

Producers

Keith Griffiths

Janine Marmot

Co-producers

Karl Baumgartner

Katsue Tomiyama

Production Co-ordinator

Hilary Benson

Production Manager

Gina Carter

Assistant Directors

Mary Soan

Finn McGrath

Jez Murrell

Casting

Irene Lamb

German Casting

Adviser:

Hetta Mantschaff

Screenplay

Alan Passes

Brothers Quay

Based on the novella

Jakob von Gunten, and

other texts by Robert

Walser

Translations

Lutz Becker

Ingrid Mylo

Stella von Bock

Angleika Worsg

Christia Merkes

Malcolm Green

Andreas Ruethi

Eva Bernhard

Jens Carl Ehlers

Director of Photography

Nic Knowland

Animation Photography

Brothers Quay

Digital Effects/Compositing

The Mill

Editor

Larry Sider

Production Designer

Jennifer Kerne

Art Director

Alison Riva

Scenic Artist

Cathy Ryan

Special Effects

1st Effects

Snow Business

Costume Design

Nikky Gillibrand

Make-up

Design:

Suzie Zamit

Artist:

Caroline Clements

Music

Lech Jankowski

Chorus Director

Henryk Gorski

Music performed by

Trumpet:

Andrzej Brych

Henryk Rzeznik

Clarinet:

Pawel Czekala

Piano:

Arnold Dabrowski

Violin:

Katarzyna Klebba

Accordion/Voice:

Ula Gembiak

Soprano:

Elzbieta Gorska

Tuba:

Jerzy Grabowski

Basoon:

Pawel Paluch

Puzon:

Stefan Sliwa

Litograph Stones:

Iza Rybacka

Percussion:

Andrzej Karpinski

Guitar/Nagel Geige:

Geige Lech Jankowski

Double Bass:

Jarogniew Mikolajczak

Cello:

Andrzej Trzeciak

Voice:

Malgorzata Walas-

Antoniello

Song

"Music Classroom

Dirge" by Jonathan

Stone

Sound Editor

Larry Sider

Foley Editor

Roger Dobson

Sound Recordist

Peter Glossop

Foley Recordist

Matt Skilton

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Colin Martin

Sound Transfers

Hackenbacker

Foley Artists

Jack Stew

Diane Greaves

Cast

Mark Rylance

Jakob von Gunten

Alice Krige

Lisa Benjamenta

Gottfried John

Johannes Benjamenta

Daniel Smith

Kraus

Joseph Alessi

Pepino

Jonathan Stone

Hebling

Cesar Sarachu

Inigo

Peter Lovstrom

Jorgenson

Uri Roodner

Schilinski

Peter Whitfield

Null

9,450 feet

105 minutes

Mono

Black and white

Partially Subtitled

Jakob von Gunten arrives to enrol at a secluded school for servants, the Institute Benjamenta, run by a brother and sister, Johannes and Lisa Benjamenta. The school is decorated throughout by stag horns and images of deer. Also attending the school are eight pupils, the most senior being Kraus, who seems to be a favourite of Johannes and Lisa. Jakob attends Lisa's classes which involve, among other things, strange rituals with cutlery, the folding of serviettes and the memorisation of set servants' speeches.

Soon, Jakob finds himself favoured over Kraus by the Benjamentas. Johannes asks Jakob to be his confidante and share his secrets. Lisa blindfolds him one night and leads him through a chalk circle on the blackboard down to her garden/bedroom and invites him to caress her. When she removes the blindfold, he finds himself still upstairs in the classroom. Images of a projectile speeding through a forest, intercut with images of Lisa, suggest that she has been stricken with some mysterious illness.

Lisa becomes increasingly unstable and unable to control classroom discipline. Led by Kraus, the students victimise Jakob. Later, Jakob is made privy to the inner chamber of the Institute, where an elaborate fishbowl containing a goldfish is kept. Lisa explains that she feels as if something is gnawing at her. Johannes announces that he wishes to close the Institute. When he tries to sexually approach Jakob, he is violently rebuffed. Lisa dies and the pupils hold a wake for her and carry her body away. Johannes closes the Institute Benjamenta. The final images are of Jakob and Johannes walking in the forest in the snow, and then of Jakob sitting in the inner chamber by the fishbowl alone.

At one point in *Institute Benjamenta*, the protagonist Jakob, baffled by the monotonous lessons in servitude that he and his fellow students repeat endlessly, conjectures that "perhaps there is some hidden meaning to all these nothings." Viewers new to the work of the Brothers Quay might be forgiven for thinking this of the film itself. Like their earlier animated films, *Street of Crocodiles* and *The Comb*, *Institute Benjamenta* is meditative and slow, wrought from opalescent images and scenes strung together like pearls on the story's fragile thread. It's made from different stuff than the stout narrative twine of mainstream movies. The synopsis above can only suggest the barest outline of the film's content. Other viewers might make different sense out of its stream of tableaux. Images of stags, snow and ice, forks, mirrors, and water sluicing from buckets proliferate. These images are not just there to support the film's meaning – they *are* the meaning. It's more of a zen koan than a movie. How much you like it depends on how much patience you have for film as transcendental meditation.

Indeed, the emptying of minds and the nullification of being appears to be



Blackboard Jungle: Alice Krige

one of the themes that run through the film. The servants, performing exercises which look like a cross between *tai chi* manoeuvres and catering tasks, chant absurd sentences in their classroom such as, "I have rescued the cat from the tall tree in the garden," and "Wake up, Duchess! The nursery is on fire!" as if they were mantras. While they are doing this, the camera tracks back and forth in rhythm with the haunting music. Jakob observes that, "there is but one lesson here endlessly repeated... later in life we shall all be something very small and subordinate." Tedium and repetition have never been so thrillingly filmed before. A plaque seen early on which reads "The Beautification of Zero" provides an appropriate slogan for the film. Lisa's death at the end, heavy with allusions to *Snow White*, is posited as a beatifying release. Thus, desire leads only to death, and the implosion of the strict order of the Institute produces no ludic joy, only a lonesome feeling of decay.

The spartan regime we see in place earlier hardly seems to offer much in the way of joy either. An intensely hierarchical society in miniature, even Johannes Benjamenta acknowledges that it seems "sterile". Yet the images of deer, one of the most socially hierarchical species, symbolise the animal passions which eventually disrupt this delicate human eco-system. A glass case in one room houses dried ejaculate of stag taken during the rutting season. (I believe this was once used as an ingredient in perfume, and thus it correlates with the suggestion that the Institute was once a perfume factory.) When Jakob is first examined by Herr Benjamenta, his head is aligned with a pair of horns on a distant wall: he's the new stag in the group, whose virility challenges the place of rival males. The whole deer theme is an evocative

metaphor, but like the games with chalk and images of water, it keeps getting extended further, and ends up creating a kind of visual entropy.

Perhaps this is the point. Dense and heavy like the scent of musk, the film richly repays a second viewing in order to see how meaningful hints are dropped early on, how images and phrases are reprised and echoed so as to build up a sense of overall structure. It is stunningly photographed in black and white, the mouldering walls of the fire-ravaged Hampton Court House where it was shot yielding rich textures in grey. Streams of water look like molten rivulets of silver. Likewise, the acting is impeccable given the schematic nature of the characters. Mark Rylance carries the central role of Jakob beautifully, and Alice Krige as the friable and fawn-like Lisa Benjamenta is especially touching. The whole film is like an eighteenth-century clock: polished, elegant, precise.

So why do I keep hearing a false note in the chimes? There is always something calculated and cold about the Quay Brothers' films. There is no doubting their technical mastery of the medium, demonstrated as clearly here in live-action as it is in their animated films. They have interesting influences – Švankmajer, Eastern European surrealism and mannerism, Kafka, Bruno Schulz, and so on – but they wear them on their sleeves, haughtily. Often their films seem comprised only of clever allusions and wilfully obscure imagery, glued together by fussy technical perfectionism. Put simply, the Quays' films lack soul. And at the heart of it, *Institute Benjamenta*, for all its visual liquidity, is arid and too pristine, a game of mirrors designed to hide the fact there really isn't much hidden in all these beautiful nothings.

Leslie Felperin

In the Bleak Midwinter

United Kingdom 1995

Director: Kenneth Branagh

Certificate

15

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

Midwinter Films

Producer

David Barron

Associate Producers

Iona Price

Tamar Thomas

Location Manager

Tom White

Assistant Directors

Simon Moseley

Emma Pounds

Mathew Penry-Davey

Emma Griffiths

Script Supervisor

Anna Worley

Screenplay

Kenneth Branagh

Director of Photography

Roger Lanser

Camera Operator

Trevor Coop

Editor

Neil Farrell

Production Designer

Tim Harvey

Costume Design

Caroline Harris

Chief Make-up Artist/Hair

Jenny Shircore

Title Design

Alan Church

Simon Giles

Music

Jimmy Yuill

Songs

"Mule Train" by Lange,

Heath, Glickman;

"Heart of Glass" by

Deborah Harry, Chris

Stein

Sound Editor

Richard Fettes

Dialogue Editor

Jim Roddan

Foley Editor

Gerard McCann

Sound Mixer

Peter Glossop

Foley Mixer

Ed Colyer

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Robin O'Donoghue

Dominic Lester

Fight Arranger

Nick Hall

Cast

Richard Briers

Henry Wakefield

Hetta Charley

Molly

Joan Collins

Margaretta D'Arcy

Nicholas Farrell

Tom Newman

Mark Hadfield

Vernon Spatch

Gerard Horan

Carnforth Greville

Celia Imrie

Fadge

Michael Maloney

Joe Harper

Jennifer Saunders

Nancy Crawford

Julia Sawalha

Nina

John Sessions

Terry Du Bois

Ann Davies

Mrs Branch

James D. White

Tim

Robert Hines

Mortimer

Allie Byrne

Tap Dancer

Adrian Scarborough

Young Actor

Brian Petifer

Ventriloquist

Patrick Doyle

Scotsman

Shaun Prendergast

Mule Train Man

Carol Starks

Associate Member

Edward Jewsbury

Nina's Father

Katy Carmichael

Mad Puppet Woman

8,852 feet

98 minutes

Dolby stereo

Black and white

Struggling English actor Joe Harper, dumped by his girlfriend and rejected for a role in a Hollywood science fiction movie, is mounting his own production of *Hamlet* over Christmas. With a loan from his agent Margaretta, he holds unpromising auditions, and assembles an eccentric company. It includes Nina, dizzy and myopic, Henry, a cantankerous has-been and Tom, a New Age obsessive. Lacking a mature actress, Joe casts Terry Du Bois, a camp pantomime dame, as Gertrude.

The cast meet designer Fadge in the village of Hope, where Joe's sister, Molly, is a teacher. Molly acts as company manager and is also leading a campaign to save the local church from developers. The company will stay in the church while they rehearse and then perform there. Rehearsals go badly: with two weeks before opening, the actors quarrel and funds run low. Joe begins to fall for Nina, who is distressed by her recent widowhood and her military father's disapproval of her

career. Terry reveals that a youthful fling produced a son who has avoided him ever since seeing him perform in panto drag.

The cast hear that Nancy Crawford, the Hollywood producer who narrowly rejected Joe, is scouting for locations in the area. Margaretta arrives to tell Joe that due to a withdrawal, he has now secured the lucrative role, but must leave for the States almost immediately. To Nina's disgust, he agrees and Molly prepares to step in. However he returns in the nick of time for the performance, which is cheered by an audience including Margaretta, Nancy and the cast's estranged relatives. Tom will replace Joe in Hollywood, the church is saved, and Nina and Joe are in love.

At the end of *In the Bleak Midwinter*, the on-screen audience follows the climactic performance of *Hamlet* with gasps and cheers. The camera picks out representative audience faces as they lose themselves in the play. The scene is perhaps Kenneth Branagh's riposte to those who have sneered at his broad-brush Shakespeare films, *Henry V* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Here the protagonist Joe's production (and, by extension, Branagh's) is reclaimed for a social purpose beyond critical appraisal. Great art, it is implied, even a ropy *Hamlet* dressed à la Marlene Dietrich, is universal: it can rally a community that has lost sense of its identity, and weave tight the straggling threads of family.

According to Branagh, *In the Bleak Midwinter* is modelled on the Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney series of musical comedies, such as *Babes in Arms* and *Girl Crazy*. In these films, the vaudevillian fervour of young wannabe performers is menaced by adult authority, which threatens at first to wreck the show the youngsters are putting on, until the adults are subsequently persuaded by seeing the performance. In Branagh's *Midwinter* the theatrical company is a substitute family itself (one far more chummy than the real thing). The elder actors, Henry and Terry, become increasingly parental, while various spiky loners couple up. Yet with so many disapproving relations lurking (Ophelia/Nina's distant father, Gertrude/Terry's estranged son and even *Hamlet*/Joe's supportive sister) it's as if the theatre itself is regarded as a juvenile persuasion or at least the disreputable profession it was in Piner's *Trelawney of the Wells*.

Acid rivalries, similar to those in Mike Newell's *An Awfully Big Adventure*, loom at first (Henry barking, "Gertrude was not written as a shirt lifter!") but they are soon diluted. After sniping and sulking, the company pulls together as quickly as might be expected in a Branagh film as conflict is not really his thing. The director's previous screen comedies, *Peter's Friends* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, similar exercises in clan-construction, were likewise driven by forced chortles and cloying sentiment. He has the excuse here that his subjects are a troupe of actors, among whom such behaviour is

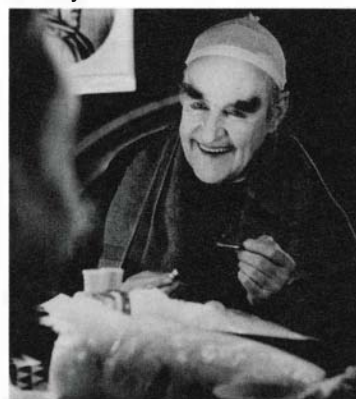
pretty much expected. But if their thespian neediness is a matter of generating a sense of purpose at the bleaker end of British theatrical life, it is also a form of special pleading.

Performing *Hamlet* shapes (and reflects) these performers' offstage lives and the correspondences made are light and often unexpected: far from being the classical stalwart, Henry is as much a pretender to his crown as Claudius. The confrontation between *Hamlet* and Gertrude, their faces sandwiched in a dank close-up, is too much for Terry. He runs off from the 'closet' scene, not because of his homosexuality, but his unhappy fatherhood. Meanwhile Joe uses the role of *Hamlet* as an absurdly solemn prism through which to view the world ("Hamlet is me, Hamlet is Bosnia, Hamlet is my grandmother"), while his own options are rather less cosmic: love or ambition, Hope or Hollywood.

Branagh's *Much Ado* and *Henry V* were shot in high-gloss colour, here the faces are beautifully etched by Roger Lanser's black and white photography – from Gerard Horan's somnolent chins, to John Sessions' campy eyetwinkles. Monochrome suits the edginess and broad humour of the auditions in Margaretta's tiny office and the rancorous rehearsals which follow. The actors fluff their lines and bump into the furniture. Nina tries for Ophelia with a burst of Debbie Harry and Terry stakes his claim on Gertrude ("Let's face it, you haven't had a matronly cleavage near you all week. I bring me own tits").

It is difficult, however, to escape the cloying symbolism of the film's Christmas setting, and Branagh doesn't put up much of a fight. The local church is menaced by a property developer. Philistine Hollywood, in the shape of a leading role in a sci-fi blockbuster threatens to Hoover up Joe. Considering how much this film embraces the sentimentality of self-esteem, to rail at Hollywood seems disingenuous. By the end, the company are hugging and bonding, and the unsalvageable production is steaming towards success in Fadge's expressionist designs. But the characters are too hurriedly bundled into shape: Richard Briers as Henry and Celia Imrie as Fadge smooth out their barbs and slump into cosiness. If *In the Bleak Midwinter* begins deep and crisp and even, it is all anyone can do to stop it turning to slush.

David Jays



Brow-beating the bard: Richard Briers

Jade

USA 1995

Director: William Friedkin

Certificate

18

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Paramount Pictures

Executive Producer

William J. Macdonald

Producers

Robert Evans

Craig Baumgarten

Gary Adelson

Co-producer

George Goodman

Production Co-ordinator

Christa Vausbinder

Production Managers

Charles Skouras III

George Goodman

Location Managers

Gregg Lazzaro

Eric Klosterman

San Francisco:

Ellen Winchell

Stefanie Lee Pleet

Assistant Directors

Newt Arnold

Robin Oliver

Hilbert Hakim

Eric R. Jones

Tom Schellenberg

Additional:

Ron Kinwald

San Francisco:

Ellen C. Martin

Script Supervisor

B. J. Bjorkman

Casting

Ronnie Yeskel

Associate:

Richard Hicks

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Joe Eszterhas

Director of Photography

Andrzej Bartkowiak

Camera Operator

Michael Scott

Steadicam Operator /

Additional Camera Operator

Greg Lundsgaard

Video and Graphic Display

Video Image

Editor

Augie Hess

Production Designer

Alex Tavoularis

Art Director

Charles Breen

Set Design

Robert Goldstein

John Chichester

Set Decorator

Gary Fettes

Set Dressers

Christopher Carlson

Fred Paulsen

San Francisco:

John Lister

Scott Newell

Scott Whitten

Production Illustrators

Patrick Tatopoulos

Tom Southwell

Special Effects Supervisor

R. Bruce Steinheimer

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Lawrence James

Cavanaugh

Costume Design

Marilyn Vance

Wardrobe Supervisor

Lisa Lovass

Make-up

Robert Ryan

Michael Laudati

Hair

Gail Rowell Ryan

Charlotte Gravenor

Special Make-up Effects

Designed/Created by

Chris Walas Inc

Title Design

Nina Saxon Film

Design

Opticals

Pacific Title & Art

Studio

Music

James Horner

Supervising Music Editor

Jim Henrikson

Music Editor

Joe E. Rand

Songs/Music Extracts

"The Mystic's Dream"

by and performed by

Loorena McKennitt;

"Isn't It Romantic";

"Where or When" by

Richard Rodgers,

Lorenz Hart, performed

by Peter Duchin and

the Peter Duchin

Orchestra; "Last To

Know" by Pat Metheny,

performed by Wallace

Roney; "Extract from

'Le Sacre du printemps'

by Igor Stravinsky

Sound Design

Gary Rydstrom

Supervising Sound Editor

Sandy Berman

Supervising Dialogue Editor

Gloria D'Alessandro

Dialogue Editors

Carin Rogers

Richard Corwin

Supervising ADR Editor

James Beshears

Supervising Foley Editor

Pamela Bentkowski

ADR Editors

Stephen Janisz

Denise Horta

Bud Bostwick
Justin Henderson's
Brother
Darryl Chan
Tommy Joy
Graham Cowley
Deputy Coroner
Nellie Cravens
Governor's Secretary
Ron Ulstad
Kyle Medford
Allen Gehhardt
Forensic Man
Garrett Griffin
Police Officer
Julian Hill
Forensic
Buddy Joe Hooker
Bohhy Bass
Sandra Berumen
Richard Ziker
Assistant D.A.'s
Arthur Johnson
Paul Schlotfeldt
Rene Charles Laprevotte
John Loftus
Tom Walsh
Howard Weatherly
Kevin Whitfield
John Wyman
Cops
Mini Mehra
Resident

Nicholas Tarvid
Pilot
Harold Morrison
Co-pilot
William Piletic
Priest
Olimpia Saravia
Maid
Tina J. Spangler
Secretary
Isaac Spivey
Homeless Man
Victor Talmadge
Lawyer
Kenneth Tigar
Corporate Man
Bill Tolliver
Medical Examiner
James Edward Veurink
Executive
Victor Wong
Mr Wong
Ron Winston Yuan
Technician
Peter Duchin and the Peter Duchin Orchestra
Black & White Ball
Orchestra

8,580 feet
95 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

● Ambitious San Francisco DA David Corelli enjoys a close friendship with prominent lawyer Matt Gavin and his alluring wife Trina, with whom Corelli once had an affair. When millionaire socialite Kyle is found brutally murdered with one of his prized antiques (an ancient axe) Corelli is assigned to investigate. In Kyle's safe, Corelli finds photographs of California Governor Lew Edwards making love to an unidentified woman. Against the wishes of Lt. Bob Hargrove and his superiors, Corelli confronts Edwards and suggests that Kyle was blackmailing him. Investigations lead to a lavish beach-house brothel, the scene of the Edwards photographs where video cameras have been secretly installed.

As police scientists struggle to reconstruct a half-burned video tape found there, Corelli and his team trace Patrice Jacinto, Edwards' sexual partner. Jacinto had been asked by her client to act like 'Jade', a hooker of legendary prowess who "took it every way". When fingerprints taken from the axe match those of Trina Gavin and an old beach-house neighbour identifies her as a regular visitor, she is unofficially questioned. Trina claims she visited Kyle on the night of the murder to discuss antiques and he showed her the axe. Corelli arranges to meet Patrice at a local restaurant, but she is mown down by a black car. The videotape evidence reveals Trina having aggressive sex with a man not her husband. Trina and Matt are summoned to the police station where they react angrily to the taped evidence. Hargrove attempts unsuccessfully to remove Corelli from the case. Trina tries to seduce Corelli and convince him of her innocence. Shunned, Trina has sex with an unidentified man. The beach house neighbour is found murdered. Realising that Trina was with him at the time of the murder, Corelli dashes to the Gavin household where he and Matt kill Hargrove who is attacking Trina. Corelli accuses Governor Edwards of masterminding the

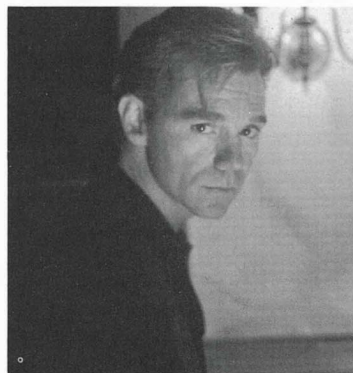
murders, and instructs him to leave Trina alone or he will release the photographs. Matt confesses that he killed Kyle, and tells Trina to be 'Jade' for him the next time they make love.

● The prospect of director William Friedkin tackling a script by hackneyed erotic-thrills merchant Joe Eszterhas is not one which devotees of either's work should relish. A master of crime-suspense thrillers with a flair for muscular action, Friedkin remains perhaps the single most sexless director currently working in Hollywood. To date, the only one of his movies to forefront erotic visuals is *Cruising*, a savage gay serial killer movie with a sado-masochistic charge which the director would doubtless disavow.

Friedkin's sexlessness is catastrophic for Eszterhas, as the writer has increasingly chosen to rely on voyeuristic titillation and not upon a rational engagement with the plot. In the hands of a Verhoeven, whose forte is violent screen sex, Eszterhas's scripts provide an amusing join-the-dots, enabling the action to move from one eye-popping set piece to the next. Strip *Jagged Edge*, *Basic Instinct* or *Sliver* of their enticing soft-porn trappings, and you're left with a trio of dopey whodunnits with laughably predictable plot twists.

Enter Friedkin, the prince of police-procedurals, who tackles *Jade* like a serious crime thriller, concentrating upon the half-witted plot. Clearly floundering with the narrative, Friedkin throws in a couple of miserably botched salacious fancies before resorting swiftly to the one party-trick he knows he can pull off with aplomb – a rip-roaring car chase through San Francisco and right into the middle of a Chinese New Year Parade. If *Jade* is a failure on almost every other level, this sequence at least joins the elevated-train chase from *The French Connection* and the Long-Beach Freeway run from *To Live and Die in LA* in confirming Friedkin as the best car-chase director since Peter Yates. Sadly, this crown Friedkin will have to wear with enough pride to satisfy all his ambitions, for as a serious modern A-list director, he is way out of his depths. As for Eszterhas, there are video directors such as Alexander Gregory Hippolyte who are tackling erotic thrillers with far more panache. Perhaps he should give Hippolyte a ring; the results could hardly be worse than this.

Mark Kermode



SFPD Blue: David Caruso

Murder in the First

USA 1994

Director Marc Rocco

Certificate

15

Distributor

Guild

Production Company

Le Studio Canal + (US)

In association with the

Wolper Organisation

Executive Producers

David L. Wolper

Marc Rocco

Producers

Marc Frydman

Mark Wolper

Co-producer

Deborah Lee

Production Associate

James Spies

Production Supervisor

San Francisco:

Bruce Devan

Production Co-ordinators

Thomas D. Adelman

San Francisco:

Mary Duann Kelly

Unit Production Manager

Deborah Lee

Location Managers

Wallace Uchida

San Francisco:

Ellen Winchell

Post-production Supervisor

Michael Tinger

Assistant Directors

Scott Javine

Kenneth Silverstein

David McWhirter

San Francisco:

Shannon Wilson

Script Supervisor

Renee Rosenfeld

Casting

Mary Jo Slater

Associate:

Steve Brooksbank

San Francisco:

Hayes and Van

Horn Casting

Screenplay

Dan Gordon

Director of Photography

Fred Murphy

Helicopter Photography

Stanton McClain

Camera Operator

Frank Perl

Steadicam Operator

Kirk Gardner

Optical Effects Supervisor

Mark Dornfield

Editor

Russell Livingstone

Production Designer

Kirk M. Petrucci

Art Director

Michael Rizzo

Set Decorator

Greg Grande

Set Dressers

Gregg Bruza

Jon Bush

Ed Nua

Jonathan Mikita

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Kevin McCarthy

San Francisco:

Peter Stoltz

Costume Design

Sylvia Vega Vasques

Wardrobe Supervisor

Robert Stewart

Key Make-up/

Make-up Design

Lisa Rocco

Key Hairstylist

Theo Mayes

Title Design

Susan Bradley

Titles/Opticals

Buena Vista Imaging

Music

Christopher Young

Music Conductor

Chris Boardman

Orchestrations

Christopher Young

Pete Anthony

Music Supervisor

Dominique Forma

Music Editor

David Cates

Music Scoring Editor

Dave Reynolds

Music Co-ordinator

David May

Songs

"Tuxedo Junction" by

Hawkins, Johnson,

Dash, Feyne, performed

by The Andrews Sisters

Supervising Sound/

ADREditor

Barney Cabral

Sound Editors

Mark Hollingsworth

John Hegedes

Andre Bacha

Ascher Yates

Howard Neiman

Sound Mixer

Ed White

ADRMixer

Tommy Goodwin

Foley Mixers

Tommy Goodwin

Vince Williams

Scoring Mixer

Robert Fernandez

Recording Mixers

Robert W. Glass Jr

Patrick Cycone

Foley Artists

Patrick David Cabral

Bruce Graham

Ocular Trauma Consultant

Dr Yoshizumi

Technical Consultants

Frank Heaney

Jim Quillen

Judge Moses Weinstein

Project Consultants

Paula Wagner

Michael Wimer

Peter McAlevey

Michael Pataki

Don McKeon

Brad Epstein

Jennifer Rocco

Richard Rush

Veder

Sosie

Travis

Stunt Co-ordinator

Doug Coleman

Cast

Christian Slater

James Staphill

Kevin Bacon

Henri Young

Gary Oldman

Associate Warden

Glenn

Embeth Davidtz

Mary McCaslin

Bill Macy

William McNeil

Stephen Tololowsky

Mr Henkin

Brad Dourif

Byron Staphill

R. Lee Ermy

Judge Clawson

Mia Kirshner

Adult Rosetta Young

Ben Slack

Jerry Hoolihan

Stefan Gierasch

Warden James Humson

Kyra Sedgwick

Blanche

Alexander Bookston

Alcatraz Doc

Richie Allan

Jury Foreman

Herb Ritts

Mike Kelly

Charles Boswell

Simpson

David Sterling

Inmate Rufus 'Roy'

McCain

Michael Melvin

Inmate Arthur 'Doc'

Barker

George Maguire
Nick Scoggin
Douglas Bennett
Joseph Richards
Julius Varnado
Inmates
Tony Barr
Winthrop
Stuart Nishet
Harve

Gary Ballard
Alcatraz Guard
Swenson
Randy Pelish
Alcatraz Guard McKeon
Neil Summers
Alcatraz Guard
Whitney
Sonny H. King
Alcatraz Guard Wimer
Eddie Bowz
Brian Leckner
Time Winters
James Keane
Lance Brady
Michael Merrins
Alcatraz Guards
Ray Quarterman
Lee E. Mathis
Wayne Parks
City Jail Guards

Warren Spottswood
Cable Car Conductor
Thomas Fenske
Robert Lee
Newsreel Reporters
Sheldon Feldner
Fred Franklin
Danny Kovacs
Joseph Lucas
William Hall
Bill Barretta
Randall Budley
Men on the Street
Wally Rose
Shopkeeper
Amanda Borden
Rosetta Young, age 9
Eve Brenner
Winthrop's Secretary
Joseph Cole
Marshall Gates
Richard Kwong
Chinese Monk
Gary Lee Davis
Giant of a Man

11,040 feet
122 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

● In Alcatraz penitentiary in 1938, Henri Young, imprisoned for stealing five dollars from a mail office, is caught trying to escape with two other inmates. As punishment, he is stripped naked and placed in one of the 'dungeons' of Alcatraz, an enclosed five feet high chamber that leaks seawater and has no light source. The normal time limit for this form of solitary is 19 days but Henri remains there for more than three years, interrupted only by regular beatings from sadistic Associate Warden Glenn and one half-hour exercise session outside. Each and every time, Henri is led to believe it is his release into normal captivity.

When finally released into the prison population in 1941, he has become wild and disturbed. In front of 200 witnesses, he attacks and murders with a blunt spoon the prisoner who leaked the escape plans. The Public Defender's Office allocates a rookie lawyer, James Staphill, to defend what is regarded as a lost cause. Staphill fails at first to get Young to talk to him, but he begins to piece together the true horror of Young's story.

On the first day of the trial, Staphill accuses the Warden and the Associate Warden of the murder, claiming that Young was only the weapon. After putting both Wardens on the stand, providing photographs of the 'dungeon' and proving that the beatings took place, Staphill is confident that Young will only be convicted of manslaughter. However, Young is so scared of being returned to Alcatraz that he insists on changing his plea to guilty. Staphill avoids this by getting him to testify to his reasons for changing. Young is convicted only of manslaughter and returned to Alcatraz, where his dead body is found in his cell sometime later.

● *Murder in the First* is Marc Rocco's second feature (his first *Where the Day Takes You*, which also starred Christian Slater, was never released theatrically in the UK). At heart it's a straightforward courtroom drama with a few newsreel nods to the Warner Bros gang-

ster movies of the 30s and a long prologue depicting petty thief Henri Young's brutal treatment in Alcatraz. Yet the static camera conventions of courtroom drama, upheld in such films as *Presumed Innocent* and *A Few Good Men*, barely restrain Rocco's delight in askew angles and sweeping movements. If his work was not enhanced by two impeccably controlled central performances from Kevin Bacon as the brutalised prisoner Henri Young and Christian Slater as Young's lawyer, James Stamphill, Rocco's omniscient crane shots and constantly shifting focus might well have proved unbearably irritating and superficial.

But Rocco strives to make a virtue out of restlessness. Young's three-year ordeal in the Alcatraz 'dungeon' is portrayed with a relish for self abasement and confined spaces reminiscent of much performance art. As blue-lit shots frame Bacon's filthy and bloodied form contorted on the wet stone floor, several other art gallery images come to mind: Robert Mapplethorpe's nudes when Young is fresh, crop-headed and relatively unscathed; William Blake's Nebuchadnezzar when he is half-crazed, bearded and crawling on all fours. Yet this conscious visual stylisation does not distract from the horror of Young's experiences. Only when the trial begins does Rocco's prowling surveillance of Young in his holding cell start to grate. As Bacon hunches into himself and Slater pounds away with unanswered questions you feel that some of the more subtle gestures of performance are being lost to the constantly passing prison bars and the low-key lighting. Given the opportunity for exploiting nervous tics offered to Bacon, he is laudably restrained, building his performance on fearful blinking and fidgeting hands. Slater, on the other hand, is smooth and upstanding enough to have been cast in a studio film of the period.

If there is a serious flaw in *Murder in the First*, however it is not the hyperactive camera style but rather the fact that the audience need never struggle with their affections. With right clearly on Young's side from before the start of the trial, Slater has the unenviable job of keeping the fires of indignation burning in us long after their cause has been removed from our eyes. Clarence Darrow-style grandstanding is now so familiar a trope of the courtroom drama and the rules of it are so flexible (prosecution objections are rarely raised to a defending attorney's final cross-examination, no matter how conjectural or opinionated) that Slater can get away with cross-examining at breakneck speed, leaving a more regular movie grandstander, such as Gary Oldman as Warden Glenn, with little to do but fume. Nevertheless, by the time the debate about Young wishing to change his plea comes around, Slater's hectoring tone has begun to nag and it takes the curious dignity that Kevin Bacon gives to the hobbled Young to keep you watching to the final credits.

Nick James

Panther

USA 1995

Director: Mario Van Peebles

Certificate

15

Distributor

PolyGram

Production Companies

PolyGram Filmed

Entertainment presents

A Working Title

Production

In association with

Tribeca Productions/

MVP Filmz

Executive Producers

Tim Bevan

Eric Fellner

Producers

Mario Van Peebles

Melvin Van Peebles

Preston L. Holmes

Working Title Head

Jane Frazer

Associate Producer

Liza Chasin

Production Supervisor

Maria Dylan

Production Co-ordinator

Dave 'Foots' Footman

Unit Production Manager

Brent Owens

Location Managers

Tony Saenz

Oakland:

Ellen Winchell

Sacramento:

Nathan Kaufman

Post-production Supervisor

Graham Stumpf

Assistant Directors

H. H. Cooper

Kia Puriefoy

Algrie Leo Chaplin

Tracey Hinds

Script Supervisor

Elizabeth Ludwick

Casting

Robi Reed-Humes

Tony Lee

Andrea Reed

Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Melvin Van Peebles

Based on his novel

Director of Photography

Edward Pei

Aerial Photography

Philip Pastuhov

Camera Operators

Kirk R. Gardner

Additional:

Philip Holahan

Stephen McNutt

Bruce Finn

Jurgen Baum

Steadicam Operator

Kirk R. Gardner

Optical Effects Line-up

Dan Hamilton

Optical Colour Timer

Dan Valiere

Editors

Earl Watson

Production Designer

Richard Hoover

Art Director

Bruce Hill

Art Department Consultant

Petey

Set Decorator

Bob Kensinger

Set Dresser

Bill Butler

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Beverley Hartigan

Special Effects

Ultimate Effects

Pyrotechnics

Ted Coplen

Costume Design

Paul Simmons

Wardrobe Supervisor

Paul A. Simmons Jnr

Make-up

Head:

Kim Davis

Key:

Diane Hammond

Hairstylists

Ted Long

Oakland/Sacramento:

Sydney Bowen

Title Design

Wenden K. Baldwin

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Stanley Clarke

Music Performed by

Solo Trumpet:

Tim Morrison

Music Conductor /

Orchestrations

William Kidd

Executive Music /

Soundtrack Producers

Adam Kidron

Samuel J. Sapp

Soundtrack Executive

Producer

Mario Van Peebles

Music Supervisor

Larry Robinson

Music Editor

Christine Cholvin

Additional:

Zigmund Gron

Songs/Music Extracts

"I Got You (I Feel Good),"

"Papa's Got a Brand New

Bag," "Say It Loud (I'm

Black and I'm Proud)"

performed by James

Brown; "Stay Alive"

performed by Mario Van

Peebles; "Express

Yourself" performed

by Joe; "Shotgun"

performed by Jr. Walker

and The All Stars; "If I

Were Your Woman"

performed by Shanie;

"Bernadette" performed

by The Four Tops; "Don't

Give Me No Broccoli and

Tell Me It's Greens (What

Happened To Our

Rhythm)" performed

by The Last Poets;

"Pimps" performed

by Shariff Simmons;

"I Thank You"

performed by Sam &

Dave; "Chosen One"

(Sitar Music) performed

by Yogi Bary; "We Shall

Not Be Moved"

performed by The

Sounds of Blackness;

"Groove Me" performed

by Bobby Brown;

"For What It's Worth"

performed by Rob Rule;

"Just My Imagination

(Running Away With

Me)" performed by Mint

Condition; "Black

People" performed by

George Clinton;

"Power To The People"

performed by The Chi-

Lites; "Fixin' To Die"

performed by Country

Joe; "Let's Straighten It

Out" performed by

Monica and Usher; "Hey

Joe" performed by Jimi

Hendrix; "Stand"

performed by Tony Toni

Tone; "The World Is A

Ghetto" performed

by Da Lench Mob;

"Star Spangled Banner"

performed by Slash,

Brian McKnight and The

Boys Choir of Harlem;

"(Don't Worry) If There's

A Hell Below, We're All

Going To Go" performed

by Curtis Mayfield;

"Love Man" performed

by MVP & The Schaefer

Brothers

Digital Sound Design/Editing

Danetracks Inc

Supervising Sound Editor

Dane A. Davis

Sound Editors

Kimberly Lowe Voigt

John Kwiatkowski

Stewart Nelsen

Nick Forshager

Charles W. Ritter

Patricio Libenson

Piero Mura

ADR Supervisor

G. W. Brown

Foley Supervisor

Kini Kay

Production Sound Mixers

Susumu Tokunow

Additional:

Felipe Borrero

ADR Mixer

Tommy Goodwin

Foley Mixer

Ron Bedrosian

Music Scoring Mixer

Dan Wallin

Additional:

Dan Humann

Dubbing Recorder

Brian Lucas

ADR Recorder

Dana Porter

Foley Recorder

Scott Austin

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Robert W. Glass Jnr

Stanley Kastner

Dan Wallin

Sound Effects Supervisor

Todd Toon

Foley Artists

Joan Rowe

Sean Rowe

Special Vocal Effects

Frank Welker

Technical Advisors

J. Tarika Lewis

Consultants

Dario Scardapane

Historical:

Ula Taylor

Stunt Co-ordinator

Bob Minor

Cast

Kadeem Hardison

Judge

Okoye Woodbine

Tyrone

Joe Don Baker

Brimmer

Courtney B. Vance

Bobby Seale

Tyrin Turner

Cy

Marcus Chong

Huey P. Newton

Anthony Griffith

Eldridge Cleaver

Bobby Brown

Rose

Nefertiti

Alma

James Russo

Rodgers

Jennifer Lewis

Rita

Chris Rock

Yuck Mouth

Roger Guenveur Smith

Pruitt

Michael Wincott



Fists of fury: Nefertiti, Bokeem Woodbine

◀ ther also bears some of the slick, high-speed hallmarks of Mario Van Peebles' first movie, *New Jack City*.

Panther bulges with material. Part of this is 'real life' history, part ideology and part fiction. The interaction of historical characters – notably Panther founding fathers Huey Newton and Bobby Seale – with the fictional, phlegmatic narrator Judge, brings up questions of cinematic truth. Is this a history or a fiction? Given that all histories are also fictions, does it matter? Not necessarily, but so much of this film is made with the simplicity of an educational introduction to the Black Panther Party that it implies an accuracy that it does not have. Then again, the brutal treatment of black people has such resonances for a modern audience for whom the Rodney King beating and subsequent riots in LA are still a recent memory that there is enough essential if not literal truth here.

The Black Panther Party was formed as a response to economic and social racism, and fired up by both Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. It seems perfectly reasonable for the film to crystallise this in specific incidents: a chirpy little boy being run over because no one bothered to put up a stop light in a black area of Oakland; a man killed by the police just for being the wrong colour in the wrong place at the wrong time. But *Panther* more or less maintains this level of simplicity throughout. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale are both great guys – heroes and visionaries. This allows for some rousing moments, when, for example, Newton quotes the law so rigorously at a cop trying to intimidate him that the police just have to let him go about his business. The way in which the Panthers utilise the law to enable them to carry guns, to use their right of free speech or of silence to stay free of the largely racist police force makes stirring entertainment, while the emphasis on the fact that they were formed to serve the community, rather than to act as a separatist paramilitary, may be a useful piece of didacticism. There is no effort, however, to explore the contradictions between the wearing of black leather uniforms and rifles and the group's sickle cell anaemia testing drives. The Panthers were an

unashamedly Marxist organisation but here they come over merely as sartorially conscious humanists, ridding the community of drug dealers and providing free, funky outdoor concerts.

The in-fighting that tore the party apart is only seen through the intervention of Eldridge Cleaver, depicted as a wicked witch who favours violence, and is ousted with such rapidity you wonder what ended up on the cutting room floor. There are hints of differences of opinion between other African American groups and the Panthers, and there is an uneasy sense of division when Newton makes Judge promise to tell no one about his double agent work. There is also a strong feeling that something is missing from the story when Newton, the anti-drugs campaigner, is killed in a drugs raid.

If the film simplifies, at least it turns away from a fatuous black-is-always-good argument. For not only is there the Eldridge Cleaver factor, but the FBI agent in charge of "neutralising" the Panthers is also black – though he looks white. Confronted by a black cop, he claims that it is not a racist issue but a political one. Yet as the film makes implicitly clear, it is precisely the fact that the two issues are closely intertwined that makes the Panthers seem so dangerous to J. Edgar Hoover.

Panther also contains some stylisation not unlike that of Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*. On the night he hears of Martin Luther King's death, Judge stands against a backdrop of a city in flames; a landscape that both depicts the exterior world and his own feverish mind. At another point, he lies in bed, his brain full of violent images: Vietnam, the looting of the party offices. Suddenly we are catapulted into an interior world – a rare moment in a film that is mostly concerned with action. While *Panther* deals with sexual politics in allowing the women to act as equals, most of this action is physical, masculine conflict. This is where Mario Van Peebles hits *New Jack City* territory: good versus bad in a male world that is irredeemably violent. *Panther* also opts for a loose ending: the struggle continues, says Judge – the good guys do not win and a happy ending is nowhere in sight.

Amanda Lipman

The Santa Clause

USA 1994

Director: John Pasquin

Certificate

U

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Walt Disney Pictures

Executive Producers

Richard Baker

Rick Messina

James Miller

Producers

Brian Reilly

Jeffrey Silver

Robert Newmyer

Co-producers

William W. Wilson III

Caroline Baron

Associate Producers

Jennifer Billings

Susan E. Novick

Production Co-ordinators

Kristine M. Gilbert

Unit Production Managers

Caroline Baron

Chris Danton

Location Manager

Beth Boigon

Post-production Supervisor

Pamela Reis

Assistant Directors

Bill Elvin

Alan Edmisten

Michael Johnson

Marcel Saumure

Casting

Renée Rousselot

Canada:

Jann Steffoff

ADR Voice:

Leigh French

Screenplay

Leo Benvenuti

Steve Rudnick

Script Supervisor

Mimi Wolch

Director of Photography

Walt Lloyd

Visual Effects Director

of Photography

John E. Sullivan

Camera Operators

Doug Ryan

Ken Withers

LA Blue Screen Unit

Motion Control:

Les Bernstein

Visual Effects Supervisor

John E. Sullivan

Special Visual Effects

Buena Vista Visual

Effects

Producer:

Carolyn Soper

Co-ordinator:

Denise Davis

Editor:

Juliette Yager

Digital Effects

Supervisors:

Dorne Huebler

Craig Newman

Co-ordinator:

Lydia Bottegoni

Compositing:

Kevin Koneval

Peter Montgomery

Winston Quitasol

Bruce Tauscher

Artwork:

Elissa Bello

Allen Gonzales

CG Reindeer

Aaron Campbell

Lee Lanier

CG Scenic Ball

Wally Schaab

Blue Screen Unit Production

Co-ordinator

Kris Nielsen

Matte Paintings

Paul Lasaine

Motion Control Operator

Les Bernstein

Editor

Larry Bock

Production Designer

Carol Spier

Art Director

James McAteer

Set Decorator

Elinor Galbraith

Set Dressers

Carlos Caneca

David Evans

Illustrators

Karen O. L. Morgan

David Russell

Key Scenic Artist

John Bannister

Scenic Artist

Melissa Morgan

Storyboard Artists

Thomas R. Cranham

Jim Craig

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Bob Hall

LA Blue Screen Unit:

Larry Fioritto

Special Effects

Robert A. Phillips

Nikki Amoroso

Puppets

Reindeer:

Rick Lazzarini

Character Shop

Punch/Judy:

Nina Keogh

Lead Puppeteer

Mike Elizalde

Puppeteers

Joanne Bloomfield

Yancy Calzada

Charles Lutkus III

Johnnie Spence

Costume Design

Carol Ramsey

Wardrobe Supervisors

Erla Lank

LA Blue Screen Unit

Colin Booth

Santa Fat Suit

Linda Benavente-Notaro

Key Make-up

Barry R. Koper

Canada:

Shonagh Jabour

Special Make-up/

Animatronic Effects

Elle Gillis

Tom Woodruff Jr

Co-ordinators:

Yuri Everson

Andy Schoneberg

Prosthetics

Steve Frakes

George Engel

Bryan Moore

Mark Viniello

Tony Matejevick

Johnny Saiko

Special Make-up Artists

Tim Mogg

Sean Sansom

Key Hairstylists

Janice Miller

LA Blue Screen Unit:

Leslie Anne Anderson

Wigs:

Elaine Short

Title Design

Deborah Ross Film

Design

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Michael Convertino

Music Conductor

Artie Kane

Orchestrations

John Neufeld

Conrad Pope

Bobby Muzingo

Music Editor

Ken Wannberg

Music Consultant

Bonnie Greenberg

Songs

"Oh Christmas Tree (O

Tannenbaum)"; "White

Christmas" by Irving

Berlin, performed by

The Drifters; "Jeopardy

Theme" by Merv

Griffin; "Gimme All

Your Lovin" by Billy F.

Gibbons, Dusty Hill,

Frank Beard,

performed by ZZ Top;

"Carol of the Bells" by

Peter Wilhousky;

"Santa Claus is Comin'

to Town" by J. Fred

Coots, Haven Gillespie,

performed by The

Chipmunks; "Jingle

Bell Ride" by and

performed by Johnny

Hawksworth; "Jingle

Bells"; "Christmas Will

Return" by Jimmy

Webb, performed by

Brenda Russell, Howard

Hewett; "The Bells of

Christmas" by and

performed by Loreena

McKennitt

Supervising Sound Editors

Bruce Stubblefield

Hari Ryatt

Sound Editors

Donald Sylvester

Darren King

John Kwiatkowski

Stewart Nelson

Peter Carlstedt

Yann Delpuech

Solange Schwalbe-

Boisseau

Keith Bilderbeck

Chuck Smith

Noah Blough

Phillip Linson

Sound Mixers

David Lee

LA Blue Screen Unit:

Roger J. Pietschmann

Music:

Dennis Sands

Sound Recordist

Larry Hoki

Foley Recordists

Tony van den Akker

Tim O'Connell

Supervising Sound

Re-recording Mixer

Jeffrey Perkins

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Dave Hudson

Supervising Sound

Effects Editor

Gregory King

Foley Artists

Andy Malcolm

Terry Burke

John Sievert

Elf Wrangler

Christy Garland

Aerial Supervisor

Bob Harman

Stunt Co-ordinator

Shane Cardwell

holds that, "the wearer waives any rights to previous identity, real or implied, and fully accepts the duties and responsibilities of Santa Claus until such time that the wearer becomes unable to do so either by accident or design."

Sceptical at first, Scott becomes convinced of his new status when the reindeer drag him and Charlie around the globe so that he can deliver the world's children their Christmas toys from a magical self-refilling bag. Then the duo are taken to the North Pole where they meet the elves in charge of the toy factory. Scott has a tough job explaining away his son's story of their adventures to his ex-wife and her new partner Neal. Over the next year and as Christmas approaches, Scott finds himself putting on huge amounts of weight and growing a large white beard, despite his best efforts at diet, shaving and exercise.

Due to his apparently bizarre behaviour, Scott loses custody of his son and all visiting rights. Ignoring this judgement, he and Charlie go back to the North Pole and set about tackling the delivery of the year's Christmas's toys. Arrested by the police after being mistaken for a burglar in one house, Scott is sprung from the police station by a group of elves. Back home he convinces Charlie that he, Laura and even Neal are all family. Laura and Neal are now finally convinced that he really is Santa and Laura throws the papers awarding her custody into the fire. Scott gives the two adults the toys they had most wanted but never received as children, a whistle and a *Mystery Date* Game. Then, wishing a "Merry Christmas to all," he takes Charlie up for one final spin in his sleigh.

One of the defining conventions of contemporary Hollywood children's films is that the key adult characters are almost always divorced, widowed or remarried. This accurately reflects the state of family life in the modern USA, but it also gives the scriptwriters the difficult task of matching the regulation optimistic contours of a children's movie with the direct experiences of its potential audience, many of whom will come from 'broken homes'. Thus, the most recent big screen *Lassie* movie is less about the dog than about a little girl who has a new stepmother and calls the dog she finds "Lassie" because *Lassie* is her favourite television show.

Complete with a passing reference to the original *Miracle on 34th Street*, this amusing saga of a divorced-turned-Santa *The Santa Clause* falls into a similar pattern of self-consciousness both about its own status as a children's movie and about the fragility of the family values it celebrates. However, unlike the 1994 *Lassie*, the film manages its difficult balancing act exceptionally well, mainly because here the focus is much more on the non-conforming adult character rather than the restless child.

Tim Allen's self-deprecating performance is one of the main reasons for the film's success. Supplied with a

steady stream of sarcastic one-liners, his permanently bemused attitude keeps cuteness at bay while at the same time he does reluctantly get into the merry spirit of things - memorably telling one child to fax in her list of toy requests and refusing another's offering of milk with the excuse that he's "lactose intolerant". Adults will appreciate this sustained line in humour, while younger children will simply enjoy the film's rich diet of glitzy special effects and busy knock-about comedy.

Of course, two prime requirements of a film about Santa are, firstly, to reassure young audiences he really does exist, and secondly, to explain how does he get in through the chimney when many homes nowadays don't have one.

Explaining the first issue, the binding 'Santa Clause' decisively disproves that old Chico Marx quip that "there ain't no Sanity Clause," though quizzical grown-ups may still be left wondering what happened to the poor exhausted chap who fell off Scott's roof: did he die or was he magically spirited off to some Arctic nursing home for worn out ex-Santas? However, it's the issue of Santa's chimney delivery system which, while doing a great service to previously lost-for-words parents, also tells us most about the movie's wish-fulfilment agenda. When Scott arrives to deliver his toys, even the most modern home is magically accorded a grand fireplace for him to drop in through. State-of-the-art special effects and the old-fashioned images of Christmas are thus united. Santa is firmly squeezed into the sooty past of the traditionally idealised Victorian Christmas.

But what Scott's Santa also has to face up to is a son he doesn't get on with and an ex-wife who increasingly wishes to deny him visiting rights. The contradiction that the film must resolve is the depiction of an apparent cosmic order in which every child can be happy and every home can have a magic fireplace, against the contrary facts that most American marriages end in divorce and that computer games have replaced traditional toys in many children's Christmas stockings.

In many recent Hollywood films aimed at children, addressing this kind of contradiction results in tacked-on optimism. Here, through a good script and a strong central performance, it becomes a positive strength. Instead of replacing Laura's new humourless partner Neal in the family circle, Scott eventually accepts Neal into it and also accepts his own lonely fate literally to work as Santa until the next upholder of the "Clause" comes along.

Far superior to the 1985 British disaster *Santa Claus*, this is a polished example of festive film-making, but there are enough comical cracks in its facade to ensure that it should appeal to die-hard cynics too. Here is a divorced Santa who really only takes on the job because there's simply nowhere else for a creative nice guy like him to go.

Tom Tunney

Sister My Sister

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Nancy Meckler

Certificate

15

Distributor

Arrow Film

Production Company

Film Four International
In association with
British Screen presents
An NFF production

Producer

Norma Heyman

Associate Producer

Joyce Herlihy

Production Co-ordinator

Lorraine Fennell

Location Manager

Jolyon Symonds

Post-production Supervisor

Stephen Barker

Assistant Directors

Davina Nicholson

Patroula Waters

Joshua Robertson

Script Supervisor

Lorely Farley

Casting

Sarah Bird

Screenplay

Wendy Kesselman

Based on her play

My Sister In This House

Director of Photography

Ashley Rowe

Steadicam Operators

Andy Shuttleworth

Dennis Kingston

Editor

David Stiven

Production Designer

Caroline Amies

Art Director

Frank Walsh

Set Dresser

Luana Hanson

Draughtsman

Dennis Boshier

Costume Design

Lindy Hemming

Make-up/Hairstylist

Jenny Shircore

Music

Stephen Warbeck

Music Conductor

Nick Ingman

Music Consultant

John Gale

Songs/Music Extracts

"Sleep My Little Sister,
Sleep" by Wendy
Kesselman, performed
by Joely Richardson;
"Primavera" by Benech,
Dumont; "Waltz" (from
"Faust", Act 2); "La Vie
Parisienne, Overture"
by Jacques Offenbach

Supervising Sound Editor

Glenn Freemantle

ADR Editor

Arthur Ludski

Foley Editor

Philip Bothamley

Sound Recorder

Chris Munro

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Dean Humphries

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jason White

Cast

Julie Walters

Madame Danzard

Joely Richardson

Christine

Jodhi May

Lea

Sophie Thurstfield

Isabelle Danzard

Amelda Brown

Lucita Pope

Visitors

Kate Cartside

Sister Veronica

Aimee Schmidt

Young Lea

Gabriella Schmidt

Young Christine

8,046 feet

89 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

into a sexual passion. This illicit relationship, conducted in the attic, is their only respite from servitude.

When Isabelle gives Lea a candy, Christine becomes jealous. Talk of Isabelle's impending marriage only exacerbates her concern that Lea will be sent away to work for the young mistress in her new home. The sisters argue, but end up in a passionate embrace. Danzard begins to notice their strange behaviour. Tensions come to a head as the young maids alter Isabelle's dress and argue with Danzard about the length of the hem. Danzard becomes increasingly weary of their impudent behaviour.

On a day when the Danzards are out, a fuse blows while Lea is ironing a satin blouse. The house goes dark and the blouse is burnt. Terrified, the sisters retreat into the attic. Madame and Isabelle return, and are enraged by what they find. Madame makes her way upstairs where she meets Christine. The confrontation comes to a violent climax as Lea joins her sister in attacking the Danzards, finally hacking them to death. The sisters are found guilty of murder. A postscript explains that Christine died in an asylum while Lea served 20 years, later working as a chambermaid after her release.

● *Sister My Sister* completes the quartet of films released in the UK this year that deal with the murderous desires of young women (the others are *Heavenly Creatures*, *Fun and Butterfly Kiss*). Like director Peter Jackson's and writer Frances Walsh's 50s New Zealand story *Heavenly Creatures*, *Sister My Sister* is also based on a real life *cause célèbre* killing: the famous Le Mans case of 1933, in which two sibling servants hacked their employers to death. Jean Genet based his play *The Maids* on the same event, using the incident to explore ritualistic games of domination and submission, dwelling on class as much as anything else. Played as a pantomime of perverse role-playing, productions of *The Maids* often make a virtue of and comment on their own staginess (the 1974 film version directed by Christopher Miles starring Glenda Jackson and Susannah York for example, was all overblown staginess).



Behind closed doors: Jodhi May, Joely Richardson

◀ *Sister My Sister* also started out as a theatre piece. Writer Wendy Kesselman became obsessed with the story after reading a contemporary newspaper account. Her retelling is very much a 'straight' one which attempts to invest the story with psychological realism through references to a cruelly neglectful mother who left the sisters in a convent where they experienced further abuse. Thus Lea and Christine's incestuous relationship is read as founded on their dysfunctional childhood. The sisters become emotional props for each other as one repressive environment is replaced by another, the second being the Danzard household, with Madame's fastidious routines – she wears white gloves to check the furniture for dust. The tone is set by Madame's own rather strangely dominating relationship with her frumpy, dullard daughter, Isabelle.

As a play, *Sister My Sister* might have drawn power from the stifling intensity of the characters' situation. These four women find themselves locked in roles that are going nowhere, those above and below stairs each in their own way are prisoners in this gloomy house. The over-stuffed drawing room – terrain of Madame and Isabelle – is not much different from the bare attic where Lea and Christine find respite. Certainly, the film renders these places similarly dark and unprepossessing. But, under Nancy Meckler's direction (this is her feature film debut), *Sister My Sister* seems less claustrophobic than awkward. While storywise it is a distant relative of *The Maids*, thematically it is closer to *Les Enfants terribles* or *Les Parents terribles* with their imploding domestic situations that hinge on sexual transgression as characters attempt to grasp and own each other. Indeed, Meckler could learn from the cinema adaptations (by Melville and Cocteau respectively) of those plays, both more charged with a terrifyingly dark and erotic intensity than hers. Instead, this chamber of horrors piece falls under the trembling portentousness of it all.

The script and acting styles, which might have worked on stage, simply foreground the artificiality without making a virtue of it, or exploring it in depth. Thus, the potentially grotesque elements of the piece end up being embarrassing, such as when Julie Walter's vain, self-important Madame turns on the radio and starts to dance across the carpeted drawing room. Such a misjudged moment robs the film of any tension that might have been established. It also makes a fool of Walters, a gifted actress who in the past has proved herself capable of more than just snappy comedy but is confined here to ungainly caricature. Meanwhile, Lea and Christine's descent into madness is blown by the breathy hysteria of Jodhi May and Joely Richardson's too wayward performances. For a story which is about the way individuals seek to control and dominate each other, *Sister My Sister* lacks the directorial control required to draw one in.

Lizzie Francke

To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar

USA 1995

Director: Beeban Kidron

Certificate

PG

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Universal Pictures

Presents

An Amblin

Entertainment

Executive Producer

Bruce Cohen

Producer

G. Mac Brown

Associate Producer

Mitchell Kohn

Production Associates

Liz Garbus

Edward A. Ioffreda

Bart Brown

Production Co-ordinator

Alison Sherman

Unit Production Manager

Celia D. Costas

2nd Unit Director

Andrew Mondshein

Assistant Directors

Barry K. Thomas

Randy Fletcher

H. H. Cooper

Nandi Bowe

Dale Nielsen

Heidi McGowen

James Weis

Script Supervisor

Mary Cybulski

Casting

Billy Hopkins

Suzanne Smith

Kerry Barden

Nebraska Unit:

Local:

Pat DiStefano

Screenplay

Douglas Carter Beane

Director of Photography

Steve Mason

2nd Unit Photography

Director:

Christopher Woods

Producer:

E. J. Foerster

Camera Operators

David Dunlap

Bruce MacCallum

Steadicam Operator

Elizabeth Ziegler

Editor

Andrew Mondshein

Production Designer

Wynn Thomas

Art Director

Robert Guerra

Set Decorator

Ted Glass

Set Dresser

Wendell Bud Hill

Scenic Artists

Robin McKercher

Ronald Botting

Ruth Cecetka

Ben Darling

Robert J. Donlan

James Geyer

Karl Hermanson

Mary Kolar

Shawna Mefferd

Lawrence Ben Wilson

Karen Steward

James P. Eggers

New York:

Lauren Doner

Rochelle Edelson

Costume Design

Marlene Stewart

Wardrobe Supervisors

Kevin P. Faherty

Patricia Eiben

Make-up

J. Roy Helland

Hairstylist

J. Roy Helland

Title Design

Balsmeyer & Everett Inc

Music/Orchestrations

Rachel Portman

Music Conductor

David Snell

Executive Music Producers

Happy Walters

Pilar McCurry

Music Editor

Suzana Peric

Music Co-ordinators

Spring Aspers

Jennifer Pyken

Songs/Music Extracts

"Body Beautiful" by

Bernadette Cooper,

Cheryl 'Salt' James,

performed by Salt-N-

Pepa; "She's A Lady"

by Paul Anka,

performed by Tom

Jones; "Zampa

Overture" by Herold,

performed by The 1st

Generation Masterpiece

Symphony; "1812

Overture" by Pyotr

Illi'yich Tchaikovsky,

performed by The

Hungarian Orchestra;

"Nobody's Body" by

Heavy D, performed

by Monifa Dahara;

"Who Taught You How"

by Crystal Waters, Eric

Kupper, performed

by Crystal Waters;

"China Girl" by Robert

J. Walsh, Wayne Scott

Jones; "Gotta Move"

by Peter Matz, per-

formed by Barbra

Streisand; "Free

Yourself" by Sami

McKinney, Denise Rich,

Warren McKrae,

performed by Chaka

Khan; "Supersoundic

#1", "Waltz

Pompadour" by Tom

Elliot, performed by

the Kronborg Strings;

"Brick House" by Lionel

Richie, Ronald LaPread,

Walter Orange, Milan

Williams, Thomas

McClary, William King,

performed by The

Commodores; "That

Lady You're With Ain't

No Lady" by Larry

Applewhite, Gene

Wisniewski, performed

by Larry Applewhite;

"Theme From Wonder

Woman" by N. Gimbel,

C. Fox; "Stand By Your

Man" by Billy Sherrill,

Tammy Wynette,

performed by David

Allan Coe; "Turn It

Out" by Shep Pettibone,

Steve Feldman,

performed by Labelle

(Patti LaBelle, Nona

Hendryx, Sarah Dash);

"Je cherche un homme

(I Want A Man)" by

Michel Emer, Georges

Pazman, French lyrics

by Yves Bruyer,

English lyrics by

Ramon Pina,

performed by Eartha

Kitt; "This Is A Man's

World" by James

Brown, Betty Newsome,

performed by Sara Hickman; "Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me" by Harry Noble Jr., performed by Johnny Mathis; "Behind Closed Doors" by Kenny O'Dell, performed by Charlie Rich; "Hey, Won't You Play) Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song" by Chip Moman, Larry Butler, performed by B. J. Thomas; "Do What You Wanna Do" by Steve Hurley, Tonia Hurley, performed by Charisse Arrington; "Hey Now (Girls Just Want To Have Fun)" by Robert Hazard, Lolly Vegas, performed by Cyndi Lauper

Choreography

Kenny Ortega

Supervising Sound Editors

Michael Kirchberger

Maurice Schell

Paul P. Soucek

Dialogue Editors

Dan Korintus

Laura Civiello

Richard Cirincione

Foley Supervisor

Bruce Pross

ADR Editors

Jane McCulley

James H. Nau

Foley Editors

Frank Kern

Steven Visscher

Kam Chan

Production Sound Mixer

Michael Barosky

Sound Recordists

Harry Higgins

Ted Clark

Orchestral Mixer

Keith Grant

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Lee Dichter

Additional Mixing

Peter Waggoner

Michael Barry

Sound Effects Recordists

Ezra Dweck

Lang Elliot

Foley Artist

Marko Costanzo

ADR/Loop

David Kramer's

Looping Group

Cast

Wesley Snipes

Noxeema Jackson

Patrick Swayze

Vida Boheme

John Leguizamo

Chi Chi Rodriguez

Stockard Channing

Carol Ann

Blythe Danner

Beatrice

Artless Howard

Virgil

Jason London

Bobby Ray

Chris Penn

Sheriff Dollard

Melinda Dillon

Merna

Beth Grant

Loretta

Alice Drummond

Clara

Marceline Hugot

Katina

Jennifer Milmore

Bobby Lee

Jamie Harrold

Billy Budd

Mike Hodge

Jimmy Joe

Michael Vartan

Tommy

RuPaul

Rachel Tensions

Julie Newmar

Herself

Joel Story

Little Earnest

Abie Hope Hyatt

Donna Lee

Jamie Leigh Wolbert

Sandra Lee

Shea Degan

Dean Houser

Joe Crojean

State Troopers

Keith Reddin

Motel Manager

Naomi Campbell

Girl

William P. Hopkins

Small Guy

Hollywood stars and a bankable camp sensibility. Where Elliot's drag queen tour of the outback was something of an abrasive backstage bitchathon with music, here internecine strife between three cross-dressers stuck in the mid-west is – after a few racial slurs at the beginning – soon reduced to a kind of Open University course in how to be a drag queen.

As *grandes dames* Vida Boheme and Noxeema Jackson, Patrick Swayze and Wesley Snipes are flamboyantly hysterical and little else, condescending beautifully to John Leguizamo's Chi Chi Rodriguez, who is merely, in their terms, a "boy in a dress". Chi Chi is required to learn charmingly anodyne maxims on the way to becoming a drag queen: "let good thoughts be your sword and shield," "ignore adversity" and "abide by the rules of love." Whether or not these are direct quotes from the works of Diana Vreeland, whose book is given by Noxeema to Snydersville's spotty store clerk to instant sartorial effect, they effectively sum up the genteel ethos of a film which appears to be walking on eggshells to avoid offending anyone. Nevertheless, while the gusto with which they otherwise enter into the spirit of things is to be commended, Swayze and Snipes are both given scenes in which they are allowed to physically humiliate men, as if to say no really, we're just acting – look how manly we are underneath.

Apart from a brief glimpse of Vida's mother, who is soon dismissed by her son as *nouveau riche*, *To Wong Foo* allows its frolicksome threesome to hit the road relatively unburdened by backstory. We learn that Vida is warm and maternal and that she works out a lot, that Noxeema takes no shit and is somewhat excitable and that Chi Chi knows every slut manoeuvre, but they otherwise remain as cardboard cut-out as their image of womanhood. Thus their instantaneous galvanising effect on the population of Snydersville is unconvincing, especially as the impact of their gaudiness and glamour is consistently undercut by the direction. The big musical production numbers here are shot in such a flat, head-on style they have little impact, and when there is a climactic crane shot that attempts an overview of Snydersville's transformed community, it feels forced.

Of all of Beban Kidron's past work it is perhaps her televised documentary *Hookers, Hustlers, Pimps and Their Johns* that makes her a likely candidate to direct this drag queen extravaganza, rather than her slight Hollywood melodrama *Used People* or her strong adaptation of Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*. In that documentary, Kidron's sympathy with outsiders and her fascination with sexual role-play and dressing up in bland domestic settings led her to show several scenes of a potentially disturbing nature, while never once forgetting that she was dealing with real people. It's a pity that neither the risk-taking nor the sympathy is in evidence here.

Nick James

Unstrung Heroes

USA 1995

Director: Diane Keaton

Certificate

PG
Distributor
Buena Vista International
Production Company
Hollywood Pictures
Producers
Susan Arnold
Donna Roth
Bill Badalato
Associate Producers
Joe Kelly
Jackie Rubin
Production Office
Co-ordinator
Christine Altomari
Unit Production Manager
Bill Badalato
Location Manager
Ralph Coleman
Location Supervisor
Billy Badalato
Assistant Directors
Matthew H. Roland
Andrew M. Flinn
Script Supervisor
Elizabeth Barton
Casting
Gail Levin
Associate:
Tricia Tomey
Voice:
Leigh French
Screenplay
Richard LaGravenese
Based on the book
by Franz Lidz
Director of Photography
Phedon Papamichael
Camera Operator
Wally Pfister
Editor
Lisa Churgin
Production Designer
Garreth Stover
Art Director
Chris Cornwell
Set Decorator
Larry Dias
Set Dressers
Roger Abell
Doug Sieck
On-set:
Glenn 'Spanky' Roberts
Costume Design
Jill Ohannesson
Wardrobe Supervisor
Meg Goodwin
Make-up
Patricia A. Gerhardt
Hairstylist
Leslie Anne Anderson
Title Design
Pittard Sullivan
Fitzgerald
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research Corporation
Music
Thomas Newman
Orchestrations
Thomas Pasatieri
Music Editor
Bill Bernstein
Songs/Music Extracts
"You Are My Sunshine"
by Jimmie Davis,
Charles Mitchell,
performed by
Ray Charles;
"L'Internationale" by
Pierre Degeyer,
Eugene Pottier
Supervising Sound Editor
Anthony Mazzei
Dialogue Editors
Ralph Osborn
Gary Lewis
Barbara Issak
Adam Sawelson
David Beadle
ADR Editors
Gary Lewis
Ralph Osborn
Adam Sawelson
Jim Hebenstreit

Foley Editors

David Hankins
Joel Valentine
Sound Mixer
Robert J. Anderson Jnr
ADR Mixers
LA:
Dean Drabin
Brian Ruberg
New York:
Paul Zydel
Spokane:
Peter Hunrichs
Foley Mixer
Dean Drabin
Music Scoring Mixer
Dennis Sands
ADR Recordists
Ann Hadsel
Doug Murray
Joan Chamberlain
Jon Van Houdt
Foley Recordist
Ann Hadsel
Sound Re-recordists
Steve Pederson
Scott Ganary
Tom Perry
Sound Effects Editors
Joe Earle
Bruce Tanis
Foley Artists
Alyson Dee Moore
Patricia Nedd
Visual Consultant
Gregory Yaitanes
Song Consultant
Allan Mason

Cast

Andie MacDowell
Selma Lidz
John Turturro
Sid Lidz
Michael Richards
Danny Lidz
Maury Chaykin
Arthur Lidz
Nathan Watt
Steven/Franz Lidz
Kendra Krull
Sandy Lidz
Joey Andrews
Ash
Celia Weston
Amelia
Jack McGee
Lindquist
Candice Azzara
Joanie
Anne DeSalvo
May
Lillian Adams
Aunt Estelle
Lou Cutell
Uncle Melvin
Sumer Stammer
Nancy Oppenheim
Sean P. Donahue
Ralph Crispi
Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis
Rabbi Blaustein
Zoanne LeRoy
Mrs Kantruitz
Vince Melocchi
Inspector Marshall
Charles Patrick
In-crowd Boy
Alison Chalmers
In-crowd Girl
Chris Warfield
Mr Clements
Wayne Duvall
Mr Crispi
Andrew Craig
Man in Line
Becky Ann Baker
Mrs Harris
Mary Mercier
Waitress
Len Costanza
Second Doctor
Peter Kaitlyn
Dr Feldman
Julie Pinson
Nurse Franklin

Zachary Bostrom
Thomas Brunelle
Joshua Boyd
Cody Dobson
Colleen Ford
Darcy French-Myerson
Danielle Judovits
Christie Mellor
Richard Marion
Ruth Silveira
Additional Voices

8,399 feet
93 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Prints by
Technicolor

In Los Angeles, in the early 60s, 12-year-old Steven Lidz is unhappy. His inventor father, Sid, treats him without affection. His adored mother, Selma, is ailing. He is not popular at school and he doesn't get on with Amelia, the woman his father has hired to look after the family until Selma recovers.

Rather than stay at home and mope, Steven decides to move in for the summer with his two uncles, Danny and Arthur. The former is an arch conspiracy theorist, close to schizophrenia, who believes there are only eight honest people living in the world. The latter is an overweight dimwit who collects rubber balls. Although the uncles live in some disarray and are highly eccentric, they look after him and he enjoys his stay. Soon, he begins to behave as strangely as they do, sending his mother pancakes through the post. He follows their advice, changes his name to Franz, and prepares for his Bar Mitzvah. His anti-religious father is appalled.

As his mother grows more and more sickly, Steven returns home. His father still has little time for him, but Steven is more popular at school thanks to his new-found rebellious ways. He takes a friend to meet the uncles. The friend plays a cruel trick on Danny which so upsets him that he ends up institutionalised. His mother's condition is now terminal. One day, as he and his sister cook waffles, Selma dies. His grief-stricken father loses his temper at the wake, forbids Steven to use his home movie camera, and throws out all his old cans of film. Steven retrieves them from the garbage and disappears. His father is suddenly worried and drives

around town with Arthur, looking for him. Eventually, they track him down to the church hall. Steven is watching the movies. Rather than upbraid him, his father sits down by his side. At last, the two manage to strike up a rapport.

Diane Keaton's first fully fledged feature as director (not counting her documentaries, television films and episodes of *Twin Peaks* and *China Beach*) begins in shudderingly banal fashion with a montage of home movie snippets, shot in best grainy black and white. It looks, at first, as if we're in the realm of *The Wonder Years*: inventor dad, John Turturro, shows off his latest contraptions, happy young son dances to mom and pop's favourite Ray Charles record, and this threatens ominously to turn into yet another of those soggy, nostalgic, rites-of-passage dramas in which we're forced to endure a boy's growing pains back in the innocent, rose-tinted 60s.

Then, as the mother (Andie MacDowell) contracts a mystery ailment, it seems as if we're veering into terminal illness territory, generally the preserve of television movies. Fortunately, though, *Unstrung Heroes* turns out to be a much richer, more idiosyncratic affair than its opening might suggest. Keaton's direction, Richard LaGravenese's script and two fittingly odd performances by Maury Chaykin and Michael Richards as Arthur and Danny, the boy's unhinged uncles, all help undermine the homely naturalism of the early sequences.

As a tale of three brothers, it sometimes seems like a fictional counterpart to Terry Zwigoff's recent documentary, *Crumb*. Turturro's character, Sid, is a bastion of sanity compared to his siblings. Whereas he manages to keep himself sane through his inventions (as Robert Crumb himself did through his drawings), Arthur and Danny have nothing to anchor them to the everyday, and have taken off into realms of their own. One is fat and ingenuous, and spends most of his time collect- ▶



Look back in anguish: Andie MacDowell

◀ ing plastic balls from the city sewers. The other is a paranoid conspiracy-theorist, convinced that Eisenhower was a Nazi and with the bizarre conviction that there are only eight honest people in the USA. Among the film's funniest moments is the scene when the duo turn up to listen to Steven's school assembly to pick class president. Steven's own speech is a disaster. His main rival, a clean-cut all-American boy with a fetish for strong leadership, looks set to carry all before him until Danny starts haranguing him from the back of the hall, accusing him and his father of being fascists.

As in LaGravenese's most famous previous script, *The Fisher King*, the oddball, socially marginalised characters turn out to be both wiser and kinder than their ostensibly normal peers. Under their influence, Steven changes his name, and embraces religion and communism. He sings the 'Internationale' instead of the class anthem, and refuses to pledge his allegiance to a system that "fried the Rosenbergs". It can't be said there's anything especially original about the way Arthur and Danny are used as kindly idiot-savants: the mad but inspired relative is a leitmotif in many filmic evocations of childhood. At least the many eccentricities of the two uncles provide the story with its comic motor and enable the film-makers to escape from the dreary visual constraints entailed in depicting the typical 60s middle-class home. The oppressive atmosphere in Steven's own family is effectively contrasted with the imaginative release he finds at his uncles' place: it's a magical lair, full of newspapers, plastic balls, toys, and bric-a-brac. Perhaps, the production design goes a little overboard to suggest as much. What looks like a small apartment is transformed under their touch into a virtual warehouse which seems to stretch forever.

The scenes involving Steven's parents are less successfully handled. John Turturro doesn't show much charm in what was probably a thankless role. "Mom, is Dad from another planet?" Steven asks about him. With his crazy inventions (contraptions such as his "perpetual motion baby jumper") and obsessive ways, he ought to come across as a mad professor-type. Instead, he's a stern, repressive sort, seemingly bereft of humour. Andie McDowell, reprising her anguished mother routine from *Short Cuts*, is all simpers and sickly sighs. She's framed throughout as some sort of idealised Madonna figure.

At least, Keaton shoots in fluid fashion. A plethora of tracking shots, rapid editing and unusual camera angles ensure this is visually rather more dynamic than the average domestic drama. In its worst moments, it may suffer from over-familiarity and lapse into mawkishness. It's certainly uneven. But there's enough invention and imagination here to suggest that Diane Keaton is already an accomplished director. Her work is bound to get better.

Geoffrey Macnab

RE-RELEASE

L'avventura

Italy/France 1959

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni

Certificate

PG
Distributor
BFI
Production Company
Cino Del
Duca/Produzioni
Cinematografiche
Europee/Société
Cinématographique
Lyre

Producer

Amato Pennasilico
Production Supervisors
Enrico Bologna
Fernando Cinquini
Production Manager
Luciano Perugia
Assistant Directors
Jack O'Connell
Franco Indovina
Gianni Arduini

Screenplay

Michelangelo
Antonioni
Elio Bartolini
Tonino Guerra

Story

Michelangelo
Antonioni
Director of Photography

Aldo Scavarda

Editor

Eraldo da Roma

Art Director

Piero Poletto

Costume Design

Adriana Berselli

Make-up

Ultimo Peruzzi

Hair

Mario Mandini

Music

Giovanni Fusco
Sound
Claudio Maielli
Sound Mixers
P. Ketoff
F. Ancillai
N. Renda

Cast

Gabriele Ferzetti
Sandro
Monica Vitti
Claudia
Lea Massari
Anna
Dominique Blanchard
Giulia
James Addams
Carrado
Leilo Luttazi
Raimondo
Esmeralda Ruspoli
Patrizia
Renzo Ricci
Anna's Father
Dorothy De Poliolo
Gloria Perkins
Giovanni Petrucci
Angela Tommasi di
Lampedusa
Enrico Bologna
Giovanni Donesi
Renato Pincirolli
Vincenzo Tranchina
Franco Cimino
Rita Moiré

13,050 feet

145 minutes

Black and white

Subtitles

● Sandro, a jaded architect who has settled for easy success rather than professional fulfilment, joins a small cruising party along the north-east coast of Sicily given by Princess Patrizia on her yacht.

Sandro accompanies his fiancée Anna, daughter of an ex-ambassador, who brings her friend Claudia, a young woman not of the same privileged class. The group swim and then go ashore to investigate a volcanic island. Anna is increasingly upset about the inadequacy of her relationship with Sandro. A storm rises and the group prepares to leave the island, but Anna is nowhere to be found. In the ensuing search, Sandro becomes attracted to Claudia who, in turn, is confused by his advances and rebuffs him.

Anna remains missing but Claudia and Sandro continue searching for her. Individually at first and then together, they visit places on the mainland where a woman fitting Anna's description has reportedly been seen. Struggling with her feelings of guilt and shame and with the thought that Anna is dead, Claudia eventually succumbs to Sandro's attentions and becomes his mistress. Their search effectively over, the couple attend a lavish party in a hotel where they encounter members of the original cruise. Claudia, fatigued, misses the party to rest. When Sandro fails to return to their room she searches the hotel for him and finds him in the arms of a prostitute. Nevertheless, she forgives the tearful Sandro. Anna is never found.

● In the early 60s, Michelangelo Antonioni visited Mark Rothko in his New York studio, having spotted a kindred sensibility in the painter's abstract expressionism; "We both make work about nothing," Antonioni explained, "but with precision." By that time Antonioni was established as the European director whose work demanded the sort of scrutiny normally accorded to painting. Although his style divided critics, none denied his importance. Like Godard's *A bout de souffle* and Resnais' *Hiroshima, mon amour*, *L'avventura* took cinematic language itself as a subject. This was a modernist cinema characterised by faith in its resources to go beyond literary and generic forms. It was also a cinema of the everyday that scrutinised emerging emotional, social and physical landscapes at a time when old certainties had been decimated by war and tragedy. These films are the radically sceptical observations of survivors waking to new realities, and their emphasis on form was an invitation to audiences to meditate on the breach that had opened up between perception and expression.

Antonioni's sixth feature *L'avventura* was a *cause célèbre* whose long-take sequences and evanescent plot scandalised the 1960 Cannes Festival. The film began the director's enduring collaboration with Monica Vitti, his *actrice-fétiche*, in a sequence of films – the others are *La notte* (1961), *L'eclisse* (1962) and *Il deserto rosso* (1964) – in which he conducts what P. Adams Sitney calls a "psychoanalysis of the boom." With these films Antonioni asks, "How does it feel to live *here and now*?" and delivers a case study of the post-war Italian 'economic miracle'. Alienation, the impermanence of relationships, the impossibility of communication between men and women and the fragility of moral certainties in a brute consumerist object-world: these themes became thoroughly intertwined with Antonioni's image as a film-maker – although for some they epitomise a solemnity dismissed by Pauline Kael as "Antonienness".

Part of the newness of these modernist films was that they delivered new images of middle-class femininity in contrast to those of such Hollywood figures as Marilyn Monroe and Doris Day. Monica Vitti's troubled and independently-minded Claudia is as significant a portrait of modernity as Anouk Aimée in *La dolce vita*, Jeanne Moreau in *Jules et Jim*, or Emmanuelle Riva in *Hiroshima mon amour*. There is a questing element to Claudia that complicates her feelings of guilt over Anna's disappearance and the sense that she has betrayed her friend by embarking on the desultory affair with Sandro. Her yearning for lucidity is accompanied by a readiness to face disillusionment, and then to move on.

In *L'avventura*, as in all of the Antonioni/Vitti films up to *Il deserto rosso*, the men are weak; Gabriele Ferzetti's Sandro pursues Claudia more out of reflex than through active desire. His is merely one version of the testosterone-

automatism for which Claudia is the uncomfortable focus throughout. Anna (Lea Massari) is more a felt absence, inhabiting the film like a ghost. Her spectral subjectivity comes to be ominously identified with the camera itself. This is implied in the eerie travelling-shot that advances on Claudia and Sandro along a narrow street as they leave a deserted, De Chirico-like village.

Antonioni's technique puts equal emphasis on length and depth. His sequences include moments before and after events that, in narrative convention, are usually considered *temps mort*. These moments show that Antonioni is as vigilantly observing landscape as character. The relationship between character and setting, 'figure' and 'ground', is crucial to his films. Nothing happens but everything in the frame counts. Through the tunnelling perspectives of Antonioni's compositions or the bisected frames in which characters face away from one another, foreground is always intimately tied to background. The moment when Claudia, visible through the window of the room as a speck on the *piazza*, waits outside for Anna while Anna and Sandro make love gives a typical unnerving edge of isolation to the scene. Landscapes in *L'avventura* – the inhospitable volcanic island, the opulent sterility of the upper middle class interiors and the backgrounds of brooding nature and classical architecture – each combine phenomenological realism (Antonioni remained a neo-realist in his taste for location shooting) with symbolism.

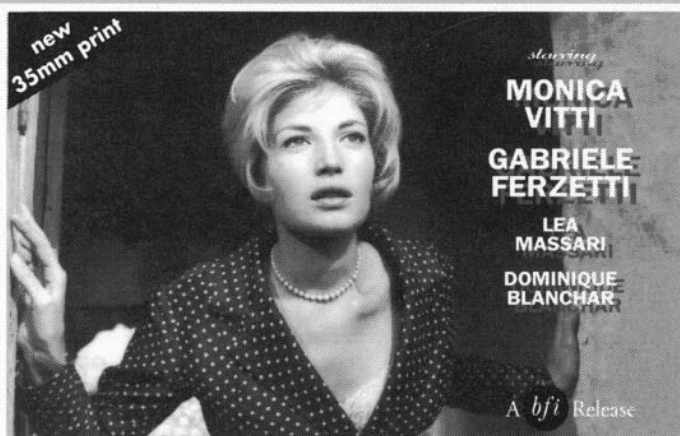
L'avventura's beauty, however, is not that of a fashion-spread glamour air-brushed with angst; it's altogether stranger. Describing an Antonioni film is like giving a running commentary on clouds: the contours of the narrative are allusive, evocative and atmospheric yet paradoxically exact. He proceeds at a tangent, approaching the edges of his object of interest and finding central significance in fugitive undertow and repercussion. It is not only Anna who disappears and yet remains present. The search for her itself fades imperceptibly as a plotline into another story of emotional aimlessness and bad faith. This moment of transition from one story to another may be the object of Antonioni's investigation. His films are always dramas of transition between presence and absence, togetherness and isolation.

L'avventura is the perfect introduction to Antonioni's cinema of absence, a style both unique and influential – John Boorman's *Point Blank*, the American paranoid conspiracy thrillers of the 70s, Wim Wenders' *Kings of the Road*, Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* and all of Atom Egoyan's films are inconceivable without him. David Thomson best summed up his enduring relevance when he wrote "I suspect that Antonioni's best films will continue to grow and shift; like dunes in the centuries of desert. In that process, if there are eyes left to look, he will become a standard for beauty."

Chris Darke

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VIDEO

Mark Kermode and Geoffrey Macnab highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the retail and rental releases

VIDEO CHOICE



Nice but dim: Rupert Everett, right, as the Prince of Wales

The Madness of King George

Nicholas Hytner/UK 1995

Nigel Hawthorne won a well deserved Oscar nomination for his portrayal of beleaguered monarch George III in this handsome, sprightly adaptation of Alan Bennett's acclaimed stage play. Helen Mirren and Amanda Donohoe provide strong support as the King's long-

suffering wife and lady-in-waiting, respectively, but the real surprise is Rupert Everett on fine comic form as the idiotic heir to the throne. Satirical potshots at the dismal state of the current monarchy are clearly intentional and generally hit their mark. This is top quality film-making, and a fine example of how a stage play can be transformed into a cinematic feast. (S&S April 1995)
● Rental: Columbia TriStar; Certificate 15



Dancing queens: Rachel Griffiths, Toni Collette

Muriel's Wedding

P. J. Hogan/Australia 1994

A huge unexpected hit, P. J. Hogan's bitter-sweet comedy is a far darker affair than the bubbly publicity would suggest. Frumpy Muriel (Toni Collette) abandons her dysfunctional family in Porpoise Spit and heads off to the big city with a single ambition: to prove herself by marrying an eligible young man. However, Sydney

offers a very different reality to the plastic dreams inspired by the ABBA songs she is devoted to. Superbly directed by Hogan, who maintains a fine balance between camp and candour, *Muriel's Wedding* is a treat which confirms the reputation of Antipodean cinema, and Toni Collette and Rachel Griffiths (as her wild friend) are two new names worth watching. (S&S April 1995) □

● Rental: Buena Vista; Certificate 15

San Demetrio, London

Charles Frend/UK 1943

There is a telling scene in Stephen Frears' recent documentary on British cinema, *Typically British*, in which Frears, Gavin Lambert and Alexander Mackendrick bemoan the amount of tea drinking in British films as they sip tea themselves. This Ealing wartime propaganda pic contains perhaps one of the most potent tea-drinking sequences of them all. After a fruitless attempt to escape by lifeboat when their petrol tanker is torpedoed by the Nazis, the crew of the *San Demetrio* reboards the still smouldering ship. The men are ragged and frozen, and their morale is at rock bottom. The captain ventures through the debris to the kitchen and, despite the risk of explosion, lights a match, puts on the kettle and makes his men a nice cuppa. Suitably fortified, they are able to guide the limping tanker back to England. The documentary-style film-making is as understated as the performances, which are phlegmatic to the point of caricature, but in a typically British way this is a very moving affair. (MFB No. 120)

● Retail: Lumiere; £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG



In need of a cuppa: 'San Demetrio, London'

Clockwork Mice

Vadim Jean/UK 1994

Vadim Jean's feisty third feature falls uneasily between two stools, uncertain whether to be an uplifting *Chariots of Fire*-style pic or a slice of down-beat social realism. At a school for problem children, an idealistic young teacher attempts to encourage his pupils by setting up a cross-country running club. Despite the integrity of Jean's direction, this would come unstuck were it not for Ian Hart's magnetic central performance. Hart consistently pulls the piece together, giving it form, coherence and drive, as well as drawing the viewer into the various situations which range from comic to tragic. Television stalwarts such as John Alderton and James Bolam augment the impressive performances from the largely unknown youngsters. A flawed but thoroughly watchable treat. (S&S June 1995)

● Rental: PolyGram; Certificate 15

The Small Back Room

Michael Powell/Emeric Pressburger/UK 1949

Powell and Pressburger's adaptation of Nigel Balchin's low-key novel about a bomb disposal expert with an alcohol problem is not at all constrained by naturalist conventions. Its expressionistic flourishes (notably the hallucinatory scene in which David Farrar, gasping for a drink, is tormented by an image of a 15-foot whisky bottle) exasperated critics. Nevertheless, it's precisely the way seemingly straightforward characters and themes are overlaid with weird exoticism which makes the work of the Archers so compelling. Embittered and sexually

tormented, Farrar's character, Sammy Rice, is a far cry from the conventional, stiff-upper lipbed leading man, and the frank treatment of his anguished relationship with his girlfriend (Kathleen Byron) was considered daring for its day. This may be psychodrama, but in its own perverse way it also stands as a tribute to that great unsung hero of the Second World War - the boffin. Incidental pleasures include a chirpy cameo from Sid James as a pub landlord and some mordant satire at the expense of ministers and civil servants. (MFB No. 182)

● Retail: Lumiere £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG



Whisky galore: David Farrar and Kathleen Byron

Spare Me

Matthew Harrison/USA 1993

Renegade professional bowler Theo is banned from the circuit for 100 years for clonking a rival on the head with a ball. He turns up in a small town looking for his father, bowling legend Buzz Fizzelli, hoping he might help him be reinstated. With its gnomic dialogue ("when you hear thunder, God is bowling," Theo mumbles over the opening credits), deadpan performances and wilfully bizarre Oedipal plot, Matthew Harrison's low budget film is in the tradition of those great American indie film-makers,

Jim Jarmusch and Hal Hartley. Sometimes it strives too hard to make an impression: Harrison throws in some illegal dwarf bowling scenes, a poisoned dachshund and some self-consciously tricky camera angles to no great effect. But even if this is a little mannered at times, *Spare Me* is shot through with such energy and freewheeling charm as to be never in any danger of stalling.

● Retail Premiere: Screen Edge; £12.99; Certificate 18; 88 minutes; Producers Matthew Harrison, Madeline Warren; Screenplay Christopher Grimm; Lead Actors Lawton Paska, Christie Macfadyen, Mark Alfred, Sunny Weil

Sanjuro (Tsubaki Sanjuro)

Akira Kurosawa/Japan 1962

Sanjuro, a scruffy Samurai getting on for 40, helps a group of hapless warriors to free their rightful ruler from captivity. It's appropriate that Kurosawa's comedy-drama is out on video the same month as the re-release of the *Star Wars* trilogy; the story unfolds like a terrestrial version of Lucas' galactic saga, displaying the same obsession with honour in battle. Toshiro Mifune brings an ironic, self-mocking edge to the main role; his swordplay may be as dynamic as anything in *The Seven Samurai*, but it's his cunning not his valour which wins the day. The humour and poetic imagery (camellia petals floating down a river are the signal for the final battle) stay in the mind as vividly as the martial arts. (MFB No. 444)

● Retail: Connoisseur Video; £15.99; Subtitles: B/W; Widescreen; Certificate 12



Samurai honour: Toshiro Mifune



Evil lurks: Orson Welles

The Stranger

Orson Welles/USA 1946

Given that this is set in a sleepy small town rather than in a big, bad city, it's a moot point whether *The Stranger* is really film noir. By Orson Welles' standards, it's a restrained, conventional affair, with little of the stylistic virtuosity of *Citizen Kane*. But its modest credentials notwithstanding, it is also a brilliantly taut, atmospheric thriller. Welles himself plays Charles Rankin, a seemingly respectable teacher, obsessed with clocks. Edward G. Robinson is his nemesis, a pipe-smoking Nazi hunter who tracks him down. Welles' character, cold but charismatic, anticipates his Harry Lime of a few years later. The picture is meticulously plotted, and boasts a memorable vertiginous dénouement in a clock tower. (MFB No. 152)

● Retail: Second Sight Film Noir; £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG

In the Mouth of Madness

John Carpenter/USA 1994

When horror novelist Sutter Cane (whose best-selling books are literally driving readers insane) mysteriously disappears, private investigator John Trent (Sam Neill) is dispatched to track him down. Trent finds himself stranded in the fictional town of Hobbs End where he is besieged by apparitions from Cane's violent fiction. Although this surreal psychological thriller quickly descends into straightforward rubbery monster fun, the first half boasts some of John Carpenter's most strikingly effective and ambitious work in years. Big name star Sam Neill lends necessary gravitas to the role of Trent, chewing over the weighty philosophical problems which Cane's repellent fiction drags up. Not as good as it could have been, but superior horror fare none the less. (S&S August 1995)

● Rental: EV; Certificate 18



Reality bites: Sam Neill



Girl trouble: Whoopi Goldberg, Mary Louise Parker, Drew Barrymore

Boys on the Side

Herbert Ross/USA 1995

An upbeat female buddy road movie which bites off more social issues than it can chew, this is infectiously charming none the less. Three women (Whoopi Goldberg, Mary Louise Parker, Drew Barrymore) go on the run after one of them believes she has killed her violent boyfriend. In search of a new life, the friends set up home in Arizona. It may

sound heavy going (issues ranging from financial independence to sexual orientation and Aids are all touched on), and tears are shed en route, but the quick-fire dialogue and rumbustious performances keep the laughs coming. Although the hefty pop soundtrack (which includes The Cranberries and The Pretenders) occasionally borders on the intrusive, it looks certain to win a teenage audience. (S&S May 1995)

● Rental: Warner; Certificate PG

Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Circle of Friends

Pat O'Connor; Eire/USA 1995; PolyGram; Certificate 15

Tolerable Gaelic whimsy, boasting a winning performance from Minnie Driver who proves more than a match for *Batman Forever* heart-throb, Chris O'Donnell. An Irish college boy, in love with a local girl, is lead astray by an alluring woman. (S&S May 1995)

The Good Son

Joseph Ruben; USA 1993; FoxVideo; Certificate 18

This dreary sub-*Omen* chiller has a history as muddled as the film itself. Novelist Ian McEwan wrote the original script, then left in high dudgeon after Macaulay Culkin's father re-cast the movie. The resulting mess (a tale of two boys, one good, one wicked) was scheduled for theatrical release in the UK in 1994, but was pulled at the BBFC's request following the James Bulger murder case. It finally creeps out on video with a ludicrous 18 certificate with cuts, despite clearly being more suited to a 15 certificate. Culkin is dreadful as the beastly boy, (Elijah Wood, as the good boy, steals the show), McEwan's script has been reduced to laughable hyperbole, and Ruben's direction is plodding. (S&S January 1994)

Mad Dogs and Englishmen

Henry Cole; UK 1994; EV; Certificate 18
In this pitifully inept adult thriller, Liz Hurley does nothing to convince us that she is anything more than just a pretty face. A snobbish socialite with a drug problem ensnares a lowly motorcycle courier in her decadent web. Hurley's acting is as wooden as a pine tree, the plot rambles, and only long-standing straight-to-video star C. Thomas Howell looks at ease. (S&S June 1995)

Outbreak

Wolfgang Petersen; USA 1995; Warner; Certificate 15

Armed only with unintentionally hilarious dialogue ("The future of the human race is in danger unless we find this monkey"), Dustin Hoffman attempts to save the world from a rapidly spreading mystery virus. Wolfgang Petersen's daffily enjoyable thriller owes a debt to George Romero's *The Crazies*, but possesses none of its menace. Hokey fun. (S&S May 1995)

Rob Roy

Michael Caton-Jones; USA/UK 1995; Warner; Certificate 15

Swords and accents clash in Michael Caton-Jones' camp costume romp which, although silly, is still much more enjoyable than Mel Gibson's dreary *Braveheart*. Gangly lump Liam Neeson grits his teeth and keeps a stoic straight face as Scots hero Rob Roy McGregor;



Cad about town: Tim Roth in 'Rob Roy'

Jessica Lange conveys a greater sense of passion as his equally heroic wife. But it's Tim Roth who steals the show as slimy, effete English aristocrat, Cunningham. A hoot. (S&S June 1995) □

Street Fighter

Steven E. de Souza; USA 1994; 20.20; Certificate 12

Uninventive screen adaptation of the computer game, *Street Fighter II*. Jean-Claude Van Damme's accent is virtually incomprehensible, Kylie Minogue is dispensable as his dreary military sidekick, and poor old Raul Julia is just embarrassing in his final role. Save your money for *Mortal Kombat*. (S&S May 1995)

Terminal Velocity

Deran Sarafian; USA 1994; Buena Vista; Certificate 15

Talented director Deran Sarafian takes a halfwitted premise (the Russian mafia pursue a beautiful sky-diver who fakes her own death) and turns it into a satisfying slice of cheap and cheerful entertainment. Nastassja Kinski is attractively wild as the *femme fatale*, the free-fall sequences are suitably racy, and even Charlie Sheen is mildly engaging. (S&S May 1995) □

Rental premiere

As Good As Dead

Larry Cohen; USA 1995; Paramount; Certificate PG; 85 minutes; Producer/Screenplay Larry Cohen; Lead Actors Judge Reinhold, Crystal Bernard, Traci Lords, George Dickerson
This standard, mid-range thriller is given a moderately interesting air thanks to Larry Cohen's upbeat script and direction. Two young women switch identities so as to commit a medical insurance fraud. When one of them dies, the other is left trapped in her friend's persona.

Circumstances Unknown

Robert Lewis; USA 1995; Paramount; Certificate 15; 88 minutes; Producer Mary Eilts; Screenplay Emily Shoemaker; Lead Actors Judd Nelson, Isabel Glasser, William R. Moses, Rhys Huber
Made-for-TV thriller which offers little in the way of surprises. A couple on holiday are stalked by a serial killer (Judd Nelson) who harbours a long-standing grudge.

The Cowboy Way

Gregg Champion; USA 1994; Universal; Certificate 12; 102 minutes; Producer Brian Grazer; Screenplay Bill Wittliff; Lead Actors

Woody Harrelson, Keifer Sutherland, Dylan McDermot, Ernie Hudson
Modern-day cowboys from New Mexico, Sonny (Keifer Sutherland) and Pepper (Woody Harrelson), go to New York to help an old friend find his daughter. Made last year during Hollywood's Western revival, Gregg Champion's lightweight comedy owes more to *Crocodile Dundee* than it does to *Tombstone* or *Wyatt Earp*. Harrelson and Sutherland are fine as the verbal sparring partners, and Ernie Hudson makes the most of his Western-obsessed LA cop, but the material never rises above the mediocre.

Flight of the Dove

Steve Railsback; USA 1994; High Fliers; Certificate 18; 88 minutes; Producer Mike Elliott; Screenplay Lewis A. Green; Lead Actors Theresa Russell, Scott Glenn, Lane Smith, Joe Pantoliano
Run-of-the-mill thriller which begins promisingly enough with sleazy sex, blackmail and guns, but which rapidly descends into a well-behaved chase movie. An alluring undercover agent (Theresa Russell), pursued by top-level assassins, seduces and recruits an explosives expert (Scott Glenn) to help escape her past. Steve Railsback keeps things moving along, and Scott and Russell are engaging leads, but the turgid plot drags things down.

Heatseeker

Albert Pyun; USA 1995; High Fliers; 88 minutes; Producers Gary Schmoeller, Tom Karnowski; Screenplay Albert Pyun, Christopher Borkgren; Lead Actors Keith Cooke, Thom Mathews, Norbert Weisser, Gary Daniels
A reliably cheesy sci-fi/martial-arts hybrid from production line director Albert Pyun. In the year 2019, a flesh-and-blood fighter is forced to take part in a tournament in which he is pitted against super-human cyborgs. Numerous scenes of high-kicking punch-ups are enlivened by cheap and cheerful make-up effects. Why doesn't Pyun just make one good movie a year instead of twelve disposable ones?

Undercover

Gregory Hippolyte; USA 1994; High Fliers; Certificate 18; 95 minutes; Producer Andrew Garroni; Screenplay Lalo Wolf, Dola Bloomie; Lead Actors Athena Massey, Tom Tayback, Anthony Guidera, Rina Riffel
Erotic-thriller king Gregory Hippolyte (aka Greg Dark) hits the mark with this sleazy nonsense. A beautiful detective (Athena Massey) goes undercover in a high-class brothel where she discovers more about her own dormant passions

than about the killer she is chasing. All the usual set-pieces are present; a self-reflexive opening monologue, a 'dressing-up in front of the mirror' montage, female bonding (followed by the inevitable 'lesbians in lingerie' romp) and the solving of the case in the final ten minutes. Mainstream exploitation at its most unabashed.

Retail

The Adventures of Huck Finn

Stephen Sommers; USA 1993; Walt Disney; £10.99; Certificate PG (S&S July 1994)

Amateur

Hal Hartley; France/UK/USA 1994; Artificial Eye; £15.99; Certificate PG (S&S January 1995)

Angels One Five

George More O'Ferrall; UK 1952; Lumiere; £9.99; B/W; Certificate U
High jinks in the mess room and derring-do in the sky are the ingredients of this enjoyably preposterous panegyric to the RAF set during the Battle of Britain. John Gregson is Baird, a fresh-faced, self-important young pilot who doesn't realise that there is more to wartime flying than simply following the rules. He makes a memorable entrance crash-landing in a fellow officer's front garden ("Hello, old man. Dropped in for tea?" is the officer's response). Top-hole entertainment, but far from British cinema's finest hour. If you have read Rex Warner's *The Aerodrome*, which portrays British pilots as swaggering crypto-fascists, you'll probably find the heroics here a little hard to swallow. (MFB No. 220)

Bad Lieutenant

Abel Ferrara; USA 1992; PolyGram; £12.99; Certificate 18 (S&S February 1993)

Blank Cheque

Rupert Wainwright; USA 1994; Walt Disney Home Video; £10.99; Certificate PG



Dollar darling: 'Dear Mr. Prohack'

PRIVATE VIEW

Clive Barker on his early short films 'The Forbidden' and 'Salomé'

Trance of innocence

Like a psychic's production of automatic writing, the work we create when we are young can be a powerful clue to what obsesses us. In a trance of innocence, without the demands of commerce or self-consciousness, we speak with a purity that is difficult to achieve in later work. Not that purity is necessarily a great artistic virtue – some of the most boring art I know values that quality far too highly – but in the scrawl of an unwitting mind there may be interesting codes to be broken.

I offer this observation in relation to the release on video of two short films I made some 20 years ago, *Salomé* and *The Forbidden*. The former was made on eight millimetre, the latter on 16 millimetre; both were shot in black and white (*The Forbidden* is in negative throughout). Neither have dialogue, but 'mood music' has been added for the video release, which effectively supports the hallucinatory atmosphere of the pieces.

In short, they are technically extremely crude and their story-lines obscure: *Salomé* vaguely follows the biblical tale of lust, dance, martyrdom and murder, but only vaguely; *The Forbidden*, though derived from the Faust story, is steeped in a delirium all of its own. Notwithstanding, the images still carry a measure of raw power some two decades on, in part perhaps because the context is otherwise so unsophisticated.

One of the inspirations for these pieces was the work of Kenneth Anger, which I first saw in the late 60s. At the time, my hometown of Liverpool boasted a burgeoning art scene, and there were small but overfilled screenings of American underground films every few weeks. Many of these offerings lost me (*Chelsea Girls* was a fine soporific, for instance), but Anger's films, with their mingling of homosexual signals, impenetrable occult symbolism and sheer cinematic brio mesmerised me. They formed in my mind a bridge between work I might attempt myself (they weren't technically very polished), and the more mainstream films that I had an appetite for: horror, science-fiction, biblical epics and musicals. Here was a cinema of hallucination, lushly stylised and perversely metaphysical. What more could I want by way of a model?

I was surrounded by friends who shared my enthusiasms, among them Doug Bradley, who went on to become Pinhead in the *Hellraiser* films, and Pete Atkins, who penned the second, third and fourth instalments in that series. They were tireless and brave collaborators. Encouraged by the sexual freedom of many of the underground films we saw, we put propriety aside and followed our instincts. Flesh, which is so much a part of the stories I have told in these pieces, particularly in *The Forbidden*. As are images of anxiety and death. The head of John the Baptist, lopped off and presented to Salomé for kissing; the body of Faust, laid out on a table by angelic



Dreams and nightmares: Doug Bradley as Pinhead in 'Hellraiser'

presences and elegantly skinned; a man dressed as a demon moving through a negated landscape; another demon, naked and blank-faced whirling in a dervish frenzy.

Some of the images – a board of geometrically arranged nails, a figure out of Vesalius, skinless but perfectly calm – find new forms in later films. In this sense these brief works are sketches for far more elaborate renderings, and both films might be mined for such prefigurings. But they would not, I think, do them great service. Yes, they are certainly scrawls – unkempt and unproficient – but there is a hermetic quality in them both that I almost envy. Although the genre in which I now work cinematically offers more opportunities for a kind of narrative dislocation than, for instance, the domestic drama (horror movies remain a refuge for the surreal) they are more and more confined by the literalism of an audience that no longer cares to be challenged or disturbed. I could not make a commercial film that does what *The Forbidden* does: folding explicit sexual images and unexplained symbols into a journey towards death. There is no significant market for such dream films, unless they pretend to be

something else; something simpler, with a beginning, middle and end.

In the world of painting, the ambition to make a work of art as a child might make it – innocent of aesthetics – is perfectly commendable. In literature, to write from the unedited unconsciousness is a valid goal. In film, however, the raw no longer has a significant place. Film-makers who want to deal in visions rather than some stale notion of cinematic reality have to bury their intentions under a heap of generic demands. We are the poorer for the absence of this experimentation.

Until some genius creates a film stock on which we simply imprint our dreams, we will remain prisoners of the commercial imperative. I only hope that the horror film-makers who are coming up do not have their eyes so fixed on producing the next *Hellraiser* or *Nightmare on Elm Street* that they miss the pleasures of letting their obsessions run wild. The psychics' scrawl may seem incomprehensible to the rational mind, but the images and ideas which fuel the great *fantastiques* are, thank God, strangers to sweet reason.

The Forbidden and *Salomé* are available on Redemption Video

Clash of the Titans

Desmond Davis; USA 1981; *Beyond Vision Fantasy Classic*; £9.99; *Certificate 12*
Pics with Ray Harryhausen special effects are generally cast with second-string actors; after all, the visuals are what really matter. This MGM spectacular bucks the trend, making Harryhausen's formidable array of flying horses, gorgons and sea monsters share the screen with a curious mix of toga-wearing thespians and ageing stars. Unfortunately, Laurence Olivier (less than Olympian as Zeus), Maggie Smith, Ursula Andress, Burgess Meredith and Claire Bloom are given such static, wordy parts that they look like puppets. (MFB No. 570)

Clear and Present Danger

Phillip Noyce; USA 1994; *CIC Video*; £13.99; *Certificate 12*
(S&S October 1994) □

Corrina, Corrina

Jessie Nelson; USA 1994; *PolyGram/Guild Home Video*; £12.99; *Certificate U*
(S&S December 1994)

The Creeping Flesh

Freddie Francis; UK 1972; *Art House*; £12.99; *Certificate 18*
Distinguished Victorian scientist Peter Cushing returns to Britain with a skeleton he unearthed in Papua New Guinea. The bundle of bones turns out to belong to an ancient, highly malevolent being which comes back to fleshy life when sprayed with water. To add to Cushing's woes, his insane wife has just died, his daughter, contaminated with evil, has gone on a murder spree, and his half-brother, rival scientist Christopher Lee, is trying to blackmail him. Standard horror pic, with at least Lee and Cushing on top form. (MFB No. 469)

D'Artagnan's Daughter (La Fille d'Artagnan)

Bertrand Tavernier; France 1994; *Artificial Eye*; £15.99; *Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 15*
Tavernier's foray into the swashbuckling genre is a bungled affair with neither the rollicking, good-natured facetiousness of Richard Lester's *The Three Musketeers* films nor the lurid intensity of a heritage pic such as *La Reine Margot*. Sophie Marceau shows plenty of vim as the heroine, Eloise, but a lazy script which hinges on some ill-defined plot against the young king, and pantomime-style performances from the rest of the cast soon make matters drag. Philippe Noiret is all girth and bluster as elderly swordsman, D'Artagnan, and too long a time is devoted to his reunion with fellow OAP dashing blades. (S&S July 1995)

Dear Mr. Prohack

Thornton Freeland; UK 1949; *The Rank Collection*; £12.99; *B/W; Certificate U*
Amiable comedy, loosely adapted from an Arnold Bennett novel, which both captures the mood of austerity era Britain and offers a rare leading role to old stalwart, Cecil Parker. Parker plays a civil servant working in the Treasury Department who unexpectedly comes into a fortune. A very youthful Dirk Bogarde is his wastrel son, Hermione Baddeley his snobbish materialist wife and Sheila Sim his would-be-actress daughter. They all do their best to spend his money, but his outspoken new secretary, Glynis Johns, helps him avert disaster. (MFB No. 189)

Dr Jekyll & Sister Hyde

Roy Ward Baker; UK 1971; *Terror Vision Hammer Original*; £10.99; *Certificate 18*
Dr Jekyll overdoses on oestrogen in this garish but inventive Hammer shocker set in Victorian England. Whenever he becomes Sister Hyde, he/she feels an uncontrollable urge to roam the foggy streets in search of men to kill. Astute casting (Ralph Bates and Martine Beswick look uncannily alike) ensure that the transformation scenes are effective. The script broaches provocative issues relating to gender and identity, but shies away from exploring them in any depth. (MFB No. 454)

The Fearless Vampire Killers

Roman Polanski; USA 1966; *Terror Vision Horror Classic*; £12.99; *Widescreen*; *Certificate 18*
Handsomely mounted but misconceived horror spoof. Transylvania has seldom looked more lavish: atmospheric lensing by Douglas Slocombe and luxuriously detailed costume and production design lend the film a lustre the average Bela Lugosi vehicle doesn't come close to matching. Jack MacGowran, one of Samuel Beckett's favourite actors, sports a fine pair of whiskers as the geriatric Van Helsing-like professor; Roman Polanski is engaging as his boyish young assistant and Sharon Tate gleefully sends up her role as the stereotypical voluptuous barmaid. Even so, the end result is neither as scary nor as funny as it should be. (MFB No. 420)

The Ghoul

Freddie Francis; UK 1975; *Art House*; £12.99; *Certificate 18*
Risible horror pic set in the 20s. Drunk on champagne after a swinging London party, two couples challenge each other to race to Cornwall in their smart new motors. One car gets lost in the mist and runs out of petrol. Tom (John Hurt), a deranged loon lurking in the grounds of a big country house, strongly advises its driver, beautiful young flapper, Daphne, not to go near the mansion. Needless to say, it's not advice she heeds. Waiting for

her is violin-playing Svengali, Peter Cushing and his sinister Indian servant. The main mystery here is why so accomplished a cinematographer as Freddie Francis invariably made such lousy films as a director. (MFB No. 498)

He Walked By Night

Alfred Werker; USA 1948; *Second Sight Film Noir*; £12.99; *B/W*; *Certificate PG*
John Alton's brilliant chiaroscuro photography of Los Angeles by night is the highlight of this atmospheric little film noir, shot on the cheap at B-studio, Eagle Lion. The storytelling is terse (for no very apparent reason, hoodlum Richard Basehart shoots a cop who stops and asks him for ID), and the documentary-style voice-over is a major irritation ("the work of the police, like that of a woman, is never done," booms the narrator as if he is introducing a crass episode of *The March of Time*). Only the visuals bring it to life. (MFB No. 183)

The High Bright Sun

Ralph Thomas; UK 1965; *The Rank Collection*; £12.99; *B/W*; *Certificate PG*
(MFB No. 373)

Hunted

Charles Crichton; UK 1952; *The Rank Collection*; £12.99; *B/W*; *Certificate PG*
Dirk Bogarde stars as a murderer on the run who befriends Jon Whiteley, the little lad who witnessed his crime. The *Perfect World*-style scenario has them scarpering to the Highlands to avoid the police. Charles Crichton's meticulous direction ensures that the storytelling isn't too cloyed by sentiment. Bogarde affects to despise most of his British movies, but he is every bit as good here as in any of those overblown Visconti movies from later in his career. (MFB No. 219)

Interview with the Vampire

Neil Jordan; USA 1994; *Warner Home Video*; £14.99; *Certificate 18*
(S&S February 1995) □

James Dean - The First American Teenager

Ray Connolly; USA 1975; *Academy Video*;



Boys on the run: Dirk Bogarde, Jon Whiteley

£12.99; *Certificate 15*
According to one of his old friends, James Dean was driven throughout his short career by "a pathological desire for attention." Perhaps this is precisely the quality that made him the greatest screen delinquent of them all. The picture of Dean which emerges is contradictory; some recall him as shy, others as arrogant. Dennis Hopper hero-worshipped him, Raymond Burr detested him, Marlon Brando ignored him. However, the footage of his *East of Eden* screen test and of some memorable early television performances prove that his ability was never in question. (MFB No. 519)

The Ladykillers/The Lavender Hill Mob

Alexander Mackendrick/Charles Crichton; UK 1955/1951; *Warner Home Video*; £9.99; *B/W*; *Certificate U*
(MFB Nos. 264/210)

The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires

Roy Ward Baker; UK 1974; *Terror Vision Hammer Original*; £10.99; *Certificate 18*
A bizarre hybrid of Hammer horror and Hong Kong martial arts movies, which stars Peter Cushing (unfazed as ever) as Professor Van Helsing. While lecturing in the far East, Van Helsing tells his students of a doomed village in China which becomes cursed every year at the time of the 7th moon. He is persuaded to lead a family of Chinese kung fu experts on an expedition to rid it of its blood-sucking tormentors. (MFB No. 488)

Legend of the Werewolf

Freddie Francis; UK 1974; *Art House*; £12.99; *Certificate 18*
Colourful lycanthropic saga which begins in the wilds of central Europe during the mid-nineteenth century. A group of refugees are savaged by wolves and the only survivor, a new-born baby, is carried off by the pack. The tot grows up to

become Wolf Boy, star attraction in a small travelling show. With his huge eyebrows and permanent scowl, irascible Welsh actor, Hugh Griffith, playing the owner of the show, is every bit as frightening as the werewolf the boy turns into every full moon. The special effects by British film industry veteran Charles Staffell are eye-catching. (MFB No. 488)

The Man in the White Suit/Kind Hearts and Coronets

Alexander Mackendrick/Robert Hamer; UK 1951/1949; *Warner Home Video*; £9.99; *B/W*; *Certificate U*
(MFB Nos. 212/187)

Miracle on 34th Street

Les Mayfield; USA 1994; *Fox Video*; £14.99; *Certificate U*
(S&S January 1995)

The Neverending Story III

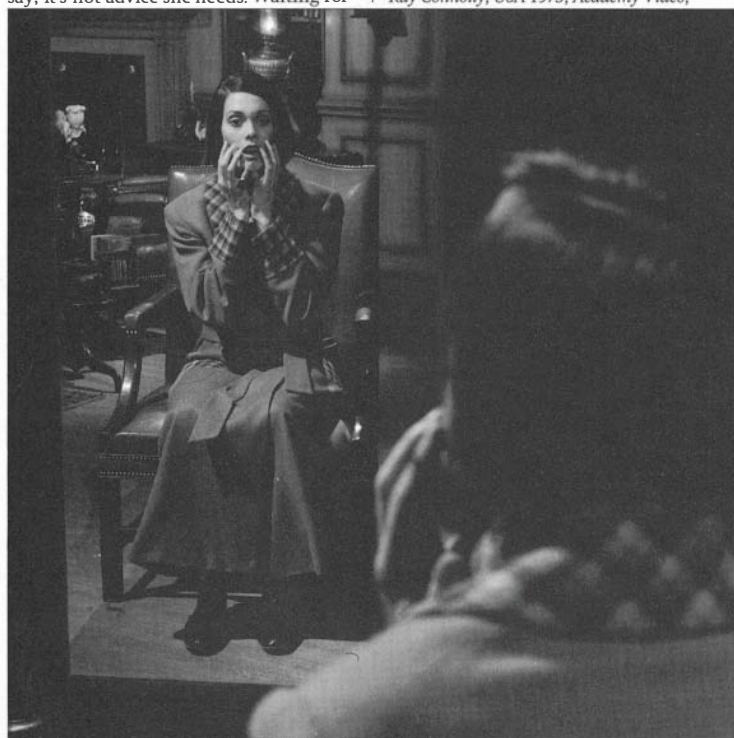
Peter Macdonald; Germany 1994; *Warner Home Video*; £10.99; *Certificate U*
(S&S January 1995)

Odette

Herbert Wilcox; UK 1950; *Lumiere*; £9.99; *B/W*; *Certificate PG*
Anna Neagle, more accustomed to playing Queen Victoria than Second World War resistance heroines, is surprisingly effective as the quietly spoken Odette (instead of her normal BBC-meets-Park Lane accent, she talks with a slight French burr). She is taken prisoner by the Nazis, but refuses to divulge any secrets. On one level, this is just another stiff-upper lip British war film; but there are few of those about in which women are the stars. (MFB No. 198)

One Million Years B.C.

Don Chaffey; UK 1966; *Beyond Vision Cult Classic*; £9.99; *Certificate PG*
Ludicrous loin-cloth saga, full of hairy men and women howling and beating



Mirror image: Martine Beswick in 'Dr Jekyll & Sister Hyde'

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THE ADJUSTER

By Richard Falcon

A revival in the popularity of Indian language films in the UK is causing classification headaches at the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). Increasingly, Hindi language films are attracting large, mainly family audiences. Anxious to reach as wide a group as possible, the theatrical distributors of Indian films are obviously keen to keep the BBFC certificates low. Thus, by the time a film arrives for classification it has often been drastically re-edited by the distributor so as to ensure a PG certificate. A recent example is the film *Dalparti* (*The Leader*), directed by Manirathnam, and passed with an 18 certificate for its video release. The director's next film, *Bombay*, was such a success (it won the Audience Award at this year's Edinburgh Film Festival), that *Dalparti* was submitted in a cut-down and less coherent version for a theatrical release and received a PG certificate.

The BBFC is chiefly concerned by the explicit violence shown in many Hindi films. Generally, movies from India don't feature swearing or overt sex scenes (sex is presented in tame 'wet sari' sequences and coded choreography which make Busby Berkeley's giant bananas seem opaque). Violence, however, is often prolific. The violence ranges from *dushum*, *dushum* – the term for exaggerated sound effects accompanying sometimes extravagantly unconvincing fight choreography – to more realistic scenes which are often based on or directly copied from Hollywood movies. When BBFC examiners assess the suitability of these films for children in the context of three-hour, all-singing, all-dancing, all-fighting Bombay talkies, we are working within very different criteria than that of our Indian counterparts at the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). The CBFC place films into three categories: U,

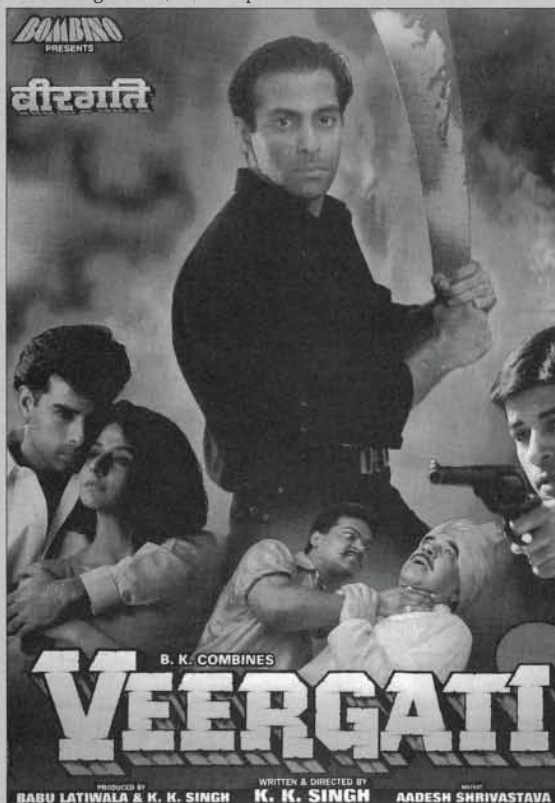
Bollywood blockbuster:
The video release of 'Veergati' contains more violence than the theatrical version

UA (an advisory 12, unlike the BBFC's mandatory one) and A which is the adult category, excluding those under 18. The majority of films in India tend to be U. Films classified UA become either PG, 12 or 15 in the UK. Although violence is less of a problem for the Indian censors than it is for the BBFC, mild sexual suggestiveness is often a reason for the CBFC to exclude a teenage audience. (*Sabse Bada Khilach* [*The Biggest Player*] was passed A in India because of an on-screen kiss, but was given a PG by the BBFC.)

The difficulty for the BBFC when distributors cut their product prior to submission and then release an uncut video, is the confusion it can cause to audiences. For instance, *Veergati* (*The Hero*), a recent Bollywood blockbuster was passed PG on film. However, the subsequent video submission included three minutes of restored footage which showed several scenes of beatings and a very lengthy retributive immolation of the villains. This resulted in a 15 classification.

People who have seen a cut version in the cinema may think the uncut video version is suitable for family home viewing. This goes against the spirit of the Criminal Justice Act Amendment to the Video Recording Act because the cut theatrical version establishes an expectation of suitability, and, thus, potentially cultivates a family market for videos considered too violent for children. For this reason, "director's cuts" containing additional violence can no longer be simply passed with a higher certificate and instead may be subjected to cuts by the BBFC.

● The most baroque video title to have passed through the BBFC recently is *Catfighting Lesbians Featuring Leather Bound Dykes From Hell with Lesbian Sex Aids Sex*. It was passed 18.



Altered perceptions: 'Rashomon'

their breasts. Raquel Welch (looking as if dressed for a *Flintstones* beach party, stars as a kind-hearted cave girl who falls for a man from the hard-hearted rock tribe. Ray Harryhausen provides the dinosaurs and assorted creepy-crawlies. (MFB No. 395)

Rashomon

Akira Kurosawa; Japan 1950; *Connoisseur Video*; £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; £15.99; Certificate 12

A wild bandit resting under a tree, catches a glimpse of a beautiful woman riding by with her husband. He pursues them, ties up the husband and rapes the wife. The incident is then recounted from four different perspectives. This was the picture which brought Kurosawa to international attention, winning him a Best Foreign Film Oscar. It is certainly a dynamic piece of film-making. Toshiro Mifune as the bandit displays a restless energy which is matched by the camera work (there is an exhilarating sequence of him rushing through the woods). The story is also ingeniously framed, but there's something lumbering and unconvincing about the conclusion with its self-conscious meditations on the nature of truth. (MFB No. 220)

Shopping

Paul Anderson; UK 1993; *PolyGram Video*; £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S July 1994)

Sirens

John Duigan; UK/Australia 1994; *Touchstone Home Video*; £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S August 1994)

The Sound of Music

Robert Wise; USA 1965; *Fox Video*; £12.99; (*Widescreen* £14.99); Certificate U Digitally remastered version of the Von Trapp saga which is given a certain tenuous credibility by the fact that it is showing in this year's London Film Festival. This comes complete with a "making of" documentary. Julie Andrews makes a very fetching nun, and there's something insidiously infectious about all those Rodgers and Hammerstein songs, but even so, this probably isn't one of our favourite things. (MFB No. 376)

The Specialist

Luis Llosa; USA 1994; *Warner Home Video*; £14.99; Certificate 15 (S&S January 1995)

Star Wars

George Lucas; USA 1977; *Fox Video*; £12.99;

(*Widescreen* £13.99); Certificate U THX digitally mastered re-release of the galactic blockbuster. In terms of special effects, George Lucas and his Industrial Light and Magic brigade may have come on in leaps and bounds since 1977, but the film still stands up remarkably well, if only for its wit and enthusiasm. In a special interview with Leonard Maltin, Lucas talks about how he was inspired to make it by memories of watching *Flash Gordon* serials as a kid. Most of the studios didn't want to go near it. It was made by a very young crew (average age 24) for the then relatively paltry budget of \$10 million, but went on to become one of the highest grossing films of all time. (MFB No. 526)

The Valley of Gwangi

James O'Connell; USA 1969; *Beyond Vision Fantasy Classic*; £9.99; Certificate 12 Ray Harryhausen's wondrous special effects are the highlight of this otherwise unremarkable drama set in Mexico at the turn of the century. James Franciscus plays a handsome young cowboy who turns up to see his old colleagues in the circus. They have managed to get hold of a miniature horse that they hope will change their fortunes, but when the horse is stolen, everyone heads off to the Forbidden Valley in search of other prehistoric monstrosities. Lurking is the great Gwangi, a dinosaur which turns out to have a King Kong-like aversion to being shown in public. (MFB No. 431)

When a Man Loves a Woman

Luis Mandoki; USA 1994; *Touchstone Home Video*; £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S September 1994)

Retail premiere

Film Before Film

Werner Nekes; Germany 1986; *Academy Video*; £12.99; Certificate E

"Man has always tried to breathe life into dead matter," collector and film theorist Werner Nekes observes as he sits in a darkened room like some latterday alchemist, showing off a formidable array of cinematic objects. In the course of what is essentially an illustrated lecture, he charts every kind of moving picture imaginable. Balinese shadow rituals, camera obscuras, magic lanterns, zoetropes, spinning discs, pop-up books, perforated pictures and even 3-D movies, all come under his scrutiny.

Letters

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 0171 436 2327. Email: S&S@bfi.org.uk

Not English

From Mark Cousins

Des Brown's extraordinary claim that British cinema is really English cinema (Letters S&S November) cannot go unanswered.

The Michael Powell Award for the Best British Film of the year went to *Small Faces*, Scottish themed and produced. It has sold all over the world. Among the most exciting work to come from these islands in recent years are *Shallow Grave* and the forthcoming *Trainspotting*; both Scottish themed, and written and produced. The most critically praised British film in Edinburgh this year was Karl Francis' *Streetlife*, made in Wales.

To say that *Priest*, about Catholicism, is only English in its themes and concerns, is laughable when Catholicism has a larger cultural impact in Northern Ireland or Scotland (and where the film did better business). To say that *Land and Freedom* is mainly English is laughable when Scots volunteered for Spain proportionally three times more than other Brits. It was a Scottish film festival, Edinburgh, which premiered and created an audience for Antonia Bird's films. *Land and Freedom* had what will probably be its single biggest British audience in Edinburgh in August (900 people).

Des Brown's argument that *First Knight* is more English than *Braveheart* is Scottish is pointless and of dubious motivation and his point that "the Scots will over-praise any French import over an English one" is unsubstantiated and wrong. He should open his eyes and see what is really happening. Director, Edinburgh Film Festival

Lena's triumphs

From Stephen Bourne

I find it difficult to understand Richard Dyer's assessment of Lena Horne, race, white space and *That's Entertainment! III* (S&S November). To begin with, while it is a pity MGM confined Horne to 'speciality' sequences, they never demeaned her. Horne and writers like Dyer have underestimated those glorious moments when she flashed across the screen. No black woman – before or since – has been given such marvellous treatment in the movies, and one of the triumphs of *TE3* is that it succeeds in highlighting and celebrating Horne's magnificence, and the splendid ways in which MGM showcased her talent. *TE3* also allows Horne to contextualise her work, unusual for a film of this kind.

As for Judy Garland performing Irving Berlin's 'I'm an Indian Too' in the aborted *Annie Get Your Gun*, though physically and vocally frail, she still manages to parody (and subvert) the song. This was the genius of Garland! I find it rather odd that Dyer doesn't acknowledge this, or take to task another, much more overtly racist, production number from *TE3*. When Joan Crawford appears in blackface to perform 'Two-Faced Woman' in *Torch Song*, it is MGM at its most vulgar and offensive.

Dyer also gets it wrong in his assessment of Fred Astaire and Ann Miller. In 1936 Astaire was described by Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson as "the man who I think is the

greatest dancer of all time". It is hardly surprising Robinson would say this, for he knew Astaire was taught by two other magnificent black dancers, Buddy Bradley and John "Bubbles" Sublett. Astaire, of course, had the greatest respect for them and it showed in his dancing. Bradley (nicknamed "Britain's Busby Berkeley") also made an impression on one of our finest dancers, Jessie Matthews. He choreographed some of her best stage and movie musicals.

For Dyer to damn Astaire for not using his "influence" to get Robinson on the screen is silly. What "influence" is he talking about? Astaire was not a movie mogul, nor a director; he was a contract player with RKO Radio, with all the restrictions that entailed. Robinson was under contract to 20th Century Fox. Even if they weren't contracted to different studios, no amount of pleading by Astaire would have influenced Hollywood's racists. And why does Dyer assume Astaire didn't try to partner Robinson in films? If he had tried, the answer would have been no. Astaire and Robinson simply would not have been permitted to appear on the screen together. It wasn't allowed. Horne found herself in a similar situation a few years later. As for Ann Miller, Dyer describes her as "white" and "shiningly pink" but it is obvious that Miller is mixed race: Native American (Cherokee), French and Irish.

Finally, for the record, it is outrageous for Dyer to say there are no blacks on the Caribbean island of *The Pirate*. Extras aside, he ignores the presence of Fayard and Harold Nicholas, two of the most accomplished dancers who ever graced Hollywood musicals. With the exception of *Stormy Weather*, it is their finest hour on the screen. London SE5

Civil war not taboo

From Susana Ramírez Jiménez

Maybe I have misunderstood Benedict Carver's *Madrid Notes* (S&S October); it gives the idea that the Spanish Civil War is a taboo topic, rarely spoken of in Spain. This is certainly not true of Spanish cinema. There have been many films made about the war in Spain since Franco's death, especially on the effects it had on society – and the rest are simply silly comedies, poorly directed and worse acted, neither artistically nor ideologically committed.

It is true the internal fights of the republican side between the communists and the POUM militias have not been reflected in any of these films. Maybe this will be the only thing Loach has revived with *Land and Freedom*. Or maybe not? I will have to wait for Aranda's *Libertarias*, but I am sure I will feel disappointed again.

Madrid, Spain

Dark laughter

From Nick Murphy

Andy Medhurst, in his otherwise delightful appreciation of the "Unhinged Invention" to be found in *Funny Bones* (S&S October), misreads a crucial point. Medhurst relies heavily on the belief that Jack Parker "deliberately" resorted to murder whilst striving for a bigger laugh. This is not the case. However inevitable the director's explanation of Jack's genius makes it seem, the death is the result of a genuine accident. Assuming otherwise destroys one of the narrative's criti-

cal metaphors. While I agree that the film is about the difference between the half-brothers and the pain that those differences inflict, it is through their individual acts of on-stage violence that this is most disturbingly demonstrated.

Tommy Fawkes commits a violence of sorts, upon himself, in Las Vegas. But his act of destruction is certainly wilful. On the other hand, Jack has no choice but to exist in the comic nirvana his half-brother so passionately seeks. Far from being "prepared to kill for it" (as Medhurst claims), Jack inadvertently stumbles into what his uncle describes as "the dark side of the moon" and there suffers the horror that always threatens to consume the true genius.

I make this small point because it is so vital to the film as well as to Medhurst's appraisal. Jack's bones must be innocent, for if they are not, and if for the audience they lose their ability to just be, they become very unfunny indeed.

London W12

Peckinpah revered

From Steven Gaydos

As a charter member of the 'Peckies', as we diehards of the Sam Peckinpah cult have come to be known, I appreciate the extensive coverage you provided the late auteur in your October issue. Paul Seydor and David Weddle both know and articulate the genius of Sam's work as well as or better than anyone writing on the subject. The script pages were invaluable, as was the concise filmography, including his work as dialogue director and television writer/director.

But I must draw attention to a glaring error at the beginning of Seydor's otherwise terrific reflection on Sam's contribution. Seydor claims that, "There were no obituaries of substance and little commentary that gave any sense of the artist who had just passed away."

The proof to refute this claim exists on yellowed newsprint pages that I have kept for more than ten years. Item One: *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* December 29 1984, page 1 and pages C1 through C3. Paul Winer wrote a 40-inch obit, while David Chute and James Bacon wrote two extensive and lavishly illustrated reflections on the man and his work. Item two: *LA Weekly*, 11 January 1985: Michael Ventura wrote a 2,000 word obit, calling Sam "the only poet west of Hawks and Ford who was not in their shadow" and "undoubtedly one of the great directors of his day". Item three is Burt Folkart's 40-inch obit in the *LA Times*, 29 December 1984. Item four is Andy Gill's 2,500 word obit in *New Musical Express*, 19 January 1985.

Also, a minor correction for the record: *The Osterman Weekend* was not "shown once in a mall in Orange County". I'm not sure how many test screenings were held, but I attended one at the Warner Hollywood Studios, right across the street from one of Sam's favourite watering holes, the Formosa Cafe. It was not a great film, but a damn interesting one, with many of Sam's political obsessions hanging out there for anyone with eyes to see. Unfortunately, the wrong eyes were (again) in charge of the scissors. Managing Editor, Special Reports 'Variety', 'Daily Variety'

Additions and corrections will appear next issue

don't let's
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the moon!
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stars!

Bette Davis, *Now Voyager*, 1942



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